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EAST IS EAST

by Peter Fingesten

HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, CHRISTIANITY
A Comparison

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In Memory of Shofu-Den
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Preface

Between two world wars, many of us in the West looked East with sympathy as well as curiosity. The names of Tagore, Ramakrishna, Gandhi, and other exponents of the East became our bywords.

In this sympathetic study, we expressed profound disillusion. Western emphasis on technology, materialism, nationalism and spiritual indifference contrasted unfavorably with India's proverbial preoccupation with man and his spiritual destiny. We grew up cynical, and the light of the East had not yet dimmed.

But ideas that fire youth may not burn so brightly upon mature examination. Surely we had more enthusiasm than knowledge of the ancient books we quoted so freely. Only a few studied the Upanishads or read the popular Bhagavad-Gita in their entirety and in context. And we rejected the West without full knowledge of its traditions or values. We "escaped," intellectually; we were superficial, even though sincere.

The world seems to divide into East and West. This division is deeper in our consciousness than that between North and South, which also is of great cultural-climatic significance. The East-West concept has romantic con-

notations which have a way of conditioning our thinking. We have, for instance, a familiar motto, *Ex Oriente lux*– from the East comes light. The East is the land of the morning, the West of night. In Egypt it was believed that the sun was born in the east each morning and died at evening in the west; the pyramids were built to the west of the Nile, called the land of the dead. The Orient is always endowed with an aura of mystery and awe.

Perhaps the trade of the Roman Empire, and the silk routes, contributed to invest the East with special glamour. During the crusades the less sophisticated peoples from the north came in contact with the luxurious Arabian culture, which itself learned much from India, and this impression upon the Western mind was deepened. Orient became synonymous with all that is rare and precious, like fine pearls, whose luster is called orient.

And in Christian churches, the most sacred symbol, the altar, is placed toward the east.

The ancient cultures of Egypt and Sumer preceded Greece and Rome by thousands of years, and agriculture, astronomy, architecture, geometry, medicine and religion originating in the Near East had profound effects upon later developments in the western Mediterranean. But the ancient Near East, the "fertile crescent," must be distinguished from India, China, Japan, and Tibet, whose cultures developed in relative isolation.

There is much literature comparing the East to the West, especially in religion. The nineteenth-century scholars who benefited so much from the comparative study of

Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages were often tempted, like Max Müller and Schopenhauer, to consider India the home of all that is good, profound, and spiritual.

During the twentieth century, India's philosophies have become even more widely known through improved communications, favorable political events and wide circulation of its religious books and epics. Hindu and Buddhist religious centers in most large American and European cities exert a strong influence on Western intellectuals. Many Western writers agree with India's bid for spiritual leadership. They, too, see India as the source of the highest ethical and metaphysical ideals, and therefore as the hope of the future.

The dissemination of the Bhagavad-Gita has reached the pocket-book stage in America (Mentor Books, 1954, over 175,000 copies in print) and popular magazines, like *Life*, have featured articles on Hinduism and Buddhism which have been read by millions. In a general sense the man on the street has become aware of the religions and culture of the East. Our colleges and universities are expanding their programs in oriental culture, and no doubt many students will be drawn to a more serious pursuit of this subject. They should be warned, however, that sympathetic books on Indian philosophy usually rely upon a same few favorable quotations from the Hindu scriptures, while most of the critical books offer little documentation. That is why this book relies somewhat extensively upon direct citations from the sacred texts. This book is intended to offer the serious student or teacher of India's

history and philosophies, or of comparative religion, a critical analysis and evaluation of the Hindu-Buddhist world-view versus the Western Judeo-Christian world-view.

A lack of primary sources, certain philosophies of history, and sentimentality have prevented many Westerners from seeing India's spiritual and social problems in a clear light. In any comparison between the East and the West it must be realized that present attitudes are largely traditional. As India idealizes her Vedic past, so does the West idealize its Greco-Roman past. But it is extremely difficult to idealize India's three-thousand-year-old color prejudice toward those people whom the invading Indo-Aryans so arrogantly called "black-skinned Dasyus," or demons.[1]

Those who view the West critically as against the East may overlook Western social reforms since classical Greece which contrast with the tragic fate of the numberless outcastes of India. Hindu or Buddhist disregard for the fate of individuals contrasts sharply with Western regard for the uniqueness of every human being in both spiritual and physical terms. India's pessimism and negativism does not compare favorably with Western optimism and positivism, nor does its lack of science, the inferior position of women, and its illiteracy. Hindu thought is not more consistent than Western thought; while teaching tolerance, it has excluded the majority of its people from public and reli-

[1] W. H. Moreland and A. C. Chatterjee, *A Short History of India* (New York, 1947), p. 12; cf. John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion* (London, 1879), p. 84.

gious life. It teaches asceticism, yet promotes veneration of the generative organ of Shiva, and in its temples presents many of its gods in erotic positions with their consorts. The theory of Karma and reincarnation, though ingenious, has enabled orthodox Hindus to refuse help to those who needed it most, for assistance in certain cases is supposed to disturb the karma of both the helper and the one being helped. India's philosophical systems evaded the problems of this life in favor of magical practices and sophisticated speculations on past and future universes.

It has become fashionable in certain circles to decry Western cultural and spiritual traditions and to search India's religious past for an answer to our problems. It is high time to re-evaluate these contentions and to compare, at least in summary fashion, the essence of Hindu and Western thought. No claim has been made to be exhaustive, however, for such a study would require the lifetimes of many specialists.

Acknowledgments

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Among former teachers, colleagues, and friends, special mention is due Prof. Bernhard Geiger, Prof. William Haas, and Dr. John Mish; Dr. James V. Mullaney, Joseph Caulfield, Dr. John E. Flaherty, Clay Lancaster, Mary Bastone, and Siegfried Mandel; and to my wife Faye, who corrected and typed several drafts of the manuscript.

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Editor's Note

For reasons of readability and uniformity, it has been decided to delete the diacritical marks from the English transliterations of Sanskrit terms. Diacritical marks (dots, bars and accents) are pronunciation guides denoting the phonetic value of certain letters.

Hindu writers use various methods of transliteration, and where one spells Upanishads another spells Upanisads, or Siva, Siva and Shiva. The scholar familiar with diacritical marks will kindly forgive this concession in favor of readers who are less familiar with Sanskrit literature.

PART I

1

Indian Traditionalism and Isolation

The subcontinent of India is the land of Brahmins, yogis, and encrusted temples. Its people have experimented since ancient times in efforts to unlock the powers of the mind and to wrest the secrets of nature from the gods. From Herodotus to Hegel, Western historians and philosophers have admired India for its unique speculative and spiritual gifts. Western adventurers and conquerors, traders and mystics have all been attracted.

India is a land of tradition. Vedic India, like classical Greece and imperial Rome, never died in the consciousness of its descendants. In India we observe an unbroken continuum in culture and religion from the earliest days to the present. Even Gandhi, one of the greatest of modern Hindus, although educated in the West, drew inspiration from India's spiritual past.

The study of the sacred scriptures, such as the Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, may have been the privilege of only the higher castes. But the countless millions who could not partake of this aspect of the sacred tradition were yet surrounded from childhood by its spirit. They were taught to sacrifice and to pray. They must scrupulously observe the duties of caste. They had

images of the deities in their homes, the village squares, and temples. They took part in the feast days of the gods and went on pilgrimages to the religious centers and holy rivers. Yogis and religious mendicants were encountered in the forests and in the cities.

To retire from family and society and to dedicate one's life to religious pursuit has been the national ideal of India for about three thousand years. Most of the ancient and modern religious teachers have taken this national ideal for granted and incorporated it into their teachings. In the West, religion is part of culture; in India, culture is part of religion.

Rarely has a nation built its entire spiritual and social life more assiduously around its sacred scriptures. These became the basis for rules of conduct (Code of Manu); for the caste system (Rig-Veda X:90); for sacrifices (the Brahmanas); for magic (the Atharva-Veda); for the many philosophical systems (the Principal Upanishads); and for their history (the Ramayana and the Mahabharata).

India developed in a peculiar geographic isolation that had a profound bearing on its mode of life. But there were occasional contacts with other cultures. Alexander's army penetrated into northern India and some of his troops intermarried with the indigenous population. There were the Scythian penetration, the influx of the Parsees from Persia, the far-reaching Moslem conquests, and the Mogul invasion. Christians are believed to have reached the west coast (Malabar) as early as the first century A.D. In the sixteenth century, Western traders went to India, and

with them the Jesuits. Not until the arrival of the English, however, did Western Christianity make any lasting impression.

In its relative isolation, India would not be likely to show a succession of new ideas or radically different philosophies, but rather an elaboration of basic concepts. Indeed, as the Hindu Haridas T. Muzumdar puts it,

> Guarded by the Himalayas on the north and surrounded by the sea on other sides, India looks as if she had been meant by nature to remain aloof from the rest of the world and to develop her civilization in isolation, untouched by the currents that stir humanity abroad.[1]

India is like a plot of land surrounded by high walls which had to develop its fruit by the crossing of existing strains rather than by the importation of new ones. Incidents of the classic epics were constantly referred to and refined. The rites became more and more elaborate; the religion and its worship became extremely sophisticated.

From the substructure of the four Vedas to the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, we see the steady refinement of a basic theme. These three groups of scriptures do not differ radically from each other. The latter are comments upon comments based upon the Vedas. The national religious ideal remains constant; only the method varies. Each offered a slightly different interpretation of the unchanging motifs: the problem of knowledge of God (veda), the union with God (yoga), and the path of life which

[1] Haridas T. Muzumdar, *Gandhi the Apostle* (Chicago, 1923), p. 12; cf. K. J. Shridharani, *Warning to the West* (New York, 1942), p. 22.

leads to God (karma). The differences in the three groups of classical scriptures are of degree rather than of kind.

Westerners, with their books, find it hard to understand how for centuries the Indians preserved their vast scriptures orally. The three great religions of the West have been called "religions of the Book," for the Hebrews revere the Torah; Christians, the New Testament, and the Mohammedans, the Koran. The early Indians had no book to venerate, for writing was introduced in India as late as the reign of the Buddhist King Asoka (*c.* 274-237 B.C.) as evidenced by his famous Pillar Edicts. Script, introduced by the Phoenician traders, is of Aramaic or Western origin. (The Indians reversed right-to-left order of the imported script and write Sanskrit from left to right.) Only from the time of Asoka was the oral tradition committed to writing.

The very exacting memorization necessary to preserve and transmit the sacred lore was not conducive to the germination of opposed philosophical systems. There are exceptions—the Buddhist system and the short-lived Charvaka materialism. But the famous six Hindu Darshanas, philosophical commentaries based upon the Upanishads, are all extensions and elaborations of earlier philosophical ideas. The anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn puts it this way:

> The written word is an almost essential condition for free and extended discussion of fundamental philosophic issues. Where dependence on memory exists, there seems to be an inevitable tendency to emphasize the correct perpetuation of the precious

oral tradition. Similarly, while it is all too easy to underestimate the extent to which ideas spread without books, it is in general true that tribal or folk societies do not possess competing philosophical systems.[2]

India seems to have profited less by contact with new people and their ideas than other peoples such as the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Elements of other cultures reaching India soon gave up their identity and submerged in the vast, flexible fabric of Indian religion.

Some of India's ideas, however, were diffused, as the reincarnation theory found in Pythagoras, and Latin Christianity adopted the Buddhist monastic movement, the tonsure and the gesture of prayer, as well as the Brahminical rosary and bell.

Since the eighteenth century, India's philosophies have had a definite influence in the West, especially on the German thinkers and the New England transcendentalists. Certain modern poets like to quote from the Upanishads; we see yoga more carefully observed since the advent of psychosomatic medicine, and the study of myth and folklore has profited vastly from the knowledge of the Buddhist birth stories (Jatakas) and the Panchatantra.

Before modern communications led to greatly enriched contacts, India lived within its natural borders in a spiritual and physical isolation, as the study of its traditional scriptures shows.

One world religion of Indian origin has had a profound effect upon the Far East. About six hundred years after

[2] *Mirror for Man* (New York, 1939), p. 30.

the death of Gautama Buddha, Mahayana Buddhism traveled north of India and conquered in its path China, Tibet, Mongolia, and Japan. In these countries the Indian doctrine adapted itself to the indigenous religions. It did not destroy but assimilated the local superstitions. In China, Buddhism to a certain extent was allied with the age-old ancestor worship of the people and of course to Taoism, which at the time of the Buddhist conquest was already in the process of decay. In Tibet, the indigenous Pön, with its necromancy and demonology, merged after the seventh century A.D. with the newly introduced Mahayana Buddhism. The result was its particular form of Buddhism now known as Tibetan Lamaism.

During the sixth century A.D., approximately a thousand years after Gautama Buddha, an Indian philosopher, Bodhidharma, set out on foot for China. He introduced into northern Buddhism a revolutionary theory called Ch'an, or Zen Buddhism, which eventually reached Japan and more than any other philosophy conditioned the Japanese warrior class of Samurai to prepare itself through self-discipline for war and death. This essentially monistic philosophy, somehow derived from a vedantic type of speculation, teaches the path of sudden enlightenment. It is supposed to be based on a verbal tradition, emerging from a smile of Gautama Buddha, transmitted entirely outside the Buddhist scriptures. Its conclusions are based upon sudden intuitive flashes of insight. Philosophically very intriguing, it is perhaps the only school of thought which incorporates humor and laughter in its system. Zen

was a philosophical reformation of the popular and sophisticated practices of the Mahayana School. It greatly influenced the arts of China and Japan. By contrast, popular Hinduism as expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita did not gain any noteworthy group of adherents beyond its borders. Hinduism was always too much involved in its own problems. Travel to foreign countries was discouraged. As the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad 1:3, 10 asserts, ". . . one should not go to the end [of the earth], lest he fall in with evil, with death." It seems that the more it was confronted by such problems as intermarriage and religious syncretism between the indigenous population and the Indo-Aryans, the more speculative and esoteric religion became.[3]

[3] "And moreover, there are others who are town-beggars, who perform the sacrifice for the unworthy, who are disciples of Sudras, and who, though Sudras, know the scriptures . . . Therefore a Brahman should not study what is non-Vedic." (Maitri Upanishad, 7:8; 7:10). All references and citations from the Upanishads used in this book are taken from Robert E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Second Revised Edition (Madras, 1949).

2

Religion and Sorcery of the Vedic Age

Taken as a whole, the philosophical depth of early Hinduism is impressive. Its results in the social sphere, however, were devastating for the majority of the population.

Eastern pantheism, fatalism, disregard for human suffering, the caste system and social apathy are derived ultimately from the Upanishads, developed from about 800 to 600 B.C. by the Indo-Aryans in northern India. These philosophical speculations about the ultimate reality are said to be based on the four Vedas, the first religious hymns of India, dated between 1200 and 800 B.C.

The Vedas (from Sanskrit *veda,* knowledge) are expressions of a nature religion. When the Indo-Aryans invaded the Punjab from the Persian plateau they possessed only one deity—Agni, or fire. Other gods soon made their appearance—Varuna, the night sky; Aditi, boundless space, conceived of as a feminine deity; Surya, the sun; Indra, the storm; Mithra, the eye of the sky (another aspect of Varuna); Vayu, the wind, and others. It was a nature religion without philosophical pretensions. The four Vedas did not seek to explain the powers of nature, but only personified them. They deified the soma plant because

its milky juice made a strongly intoxicating drink inducing a frenzy like that of the wine of Dionysian ritual. The most important sacrifices practiced during Vedic times were the horse sacrifice, the fire sacrifice, and the soma sacrifice.

The first book, the Rig-Veda, is a collection of hymns of praise. The second, Yajur-Veda, contains the sacrificial hymns used at the performance of various sacrifices. The third, Sama-Veda, contains hymns especially selected to accompany the soma sacrifices as well as the cult of the dead, and the fourth, Atharva-Veda, is a compendium of spells, sorcery, and witchcraft.

It is interesting that Brahma in the Rig-Veda is not yet a name for the supreme god but only a noun meaning praise and worship. The supreme is known by several names, notably Vismakarman, addressed as "Father who made us" (X:82) and "Lord of speech" (X:81).

The Vedic gods were always fighting on the side of the invaders. With this help of the gods they slew the conquered ones. The gods had neither pity nor compassion for the darker inhabitants of India. The Vedic gods would yield to magic and sacrifices, which explains the great body of Indian magic and spells (mantras) developed during Vedic times.[1]

The hymns and spells in the Atharva-Veda have two aspects—they are useful to oneself but harmful to others.

[1] "When he [man] finds that the Vedic Mantras have the power to produce rain he gets faith in them and he has an inclination to study them."—Swami Sivananda, *Brahma Sutras* (Rishikesh, 1949), p. 27. Women however, were traditionally excluded from the chanting of

Atharva is represented allegorically as a lean black man, sharp, irascible and amorous. This fourth Veda is an esoteric book. That is why we find the Vedas often spoken of as three. Many Hindus who are embarrassed at the low caliber of this Veda call it a "late addition." Yet it is part and parcel of the earliest stage of Hindu religion, and like the other three, *sruti*, or a revealed scripture. To the Hindu scholar S. Radhakrishnan, "It shows the result of the compromising spirit adopted by the Vedic Aryans in view of the new gods and goblins worshipped by the original peoples of the country whom they were slowly subduing."[2] Witchcraft, though feared, penetrated every phase of Vedic thought. The sacred texts of the Atharva-Veda were recommended as the true weapons with which a Brahman may slay his enemies, and the king had to choose as his chaplain a "purohita," one who is skilled in these spells, curses, and charms.

Actually the Vedas cannot be said either to be a philosophical system or to give explicit rules of conduct applicable to a variety of situations. Instead, we find in the Rig-Veda such hymns as these:

To Indra (II:12, 4):

> By whom this universe was made to tremble, who chased away the humbled brood of demons,

mantras, as we read in the Code of Manu, IX:18: "No religious ceremony for women should be [accompanied] by *mantras* . . . for women being weak creatures, and having no [share in the] *mantras*, are falsehood itself. So stands the law." E. W. Hopkins, ed., *The Ordinances of Manu* (London, 1884), p. 247.

[2] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London, 1948), I, p. 65.

Who, like a gambler gathering his winnings, seized the foe's riches, he, O men, is Indra.

To Varuna (II:28, 7):

Strike us not, Varuna, with those dread weapons which, Asura, at thy bidding, wound the sinner.
Let us not pass away from light to exile. Scatter, that we may live, the men who hate us.

To Indra (X:119, 7-10):

The heavens and earth themselves have not grown equal to one half of me:
Have I not drunk of soma juice?

I in my grandeur have surpassed the heavens and all this spacious earth:
Have I not drunk of soma juice?

Aha! this spacious earth will I deposit either here or there:
Have I not drunk of soma juice?

In one short moment will I smite the earth in fury here or there:
Have I not drunk of soma juice?

To Agni and the Maruts (I:19, 5):

They who are brilliant, of terrible designs, powerful, and devourers of foes; with the Maruts come hither, O Agni!

To the Maruts (I:39, 2, 7, 8, 10):

May your weapons be firm to attack, strong also to withstand . . .
O Rudras, we quickly desire your help for our race. Come now to us with help, as of yore; thus now for the sake of the frightened Kaṇva.
Whatever fiend, roused by you or roused by men, attacks us, deprive him of power, of strength, and of your favors.

Bounteous givers, you carry whole strength, whole power, ye shakers of the world. Send, O Maruts, against the wrathful enemy of the poets an enemy, like an arrow.

To the Maruts and Rudra (VII:59, 8, 9):

O Maruts, that hateful man who beyond our thoughts tries to hurt us, O Vasus, may he catch the snares of Druh; kill him with your hottest bolt!

O you Maruts, full of heat, here is the libation; be pleased to accept it, O you who destroy the enemies by your help.

Varuna, the upholder of the moral order of the universe, in an often-quoted hymn (I:25, 19, 20), is addressed:

Varuna, hear this call of mine: be gracious unto us this day; longing for help, I cry to thee. . . . Thou, O wise god, art lord of all, thou art the king of earth and heaven; hear, as thou goest on thy way.

Yet in Book VII:74, trust in Varuna has already vanished, and Rudra, the howling and terrible god, prototype of the destructive Shiva and leader of the storm gods, the Maruts, is invoked for protection from the "snare" of Varuna:

Soma and Rudra, wielding sharp weapons and sharp bolts, kind friends be gracious unto us here! Deliver us from the snare of Varuna, and guard us, as kind-hearted gods!

In the last book (X) of the Rig-Veda we find some speculative thoughts. There is the famous Song of Creation which speculates upon the origin of the world and of the gods. It arrives at no definite answer, but only at a question:

Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?

The Gods are later than this world's production. Who knows, then whence it first came into being?

He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,
Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not (X:129, 6-7).[3]

It is interesting to note that in at least one instance in the Upanishads, devils are considered older than gods:

The gods (*deva*) and the devils (*asura*) were the twofold offspring of Prajapati [Brahma]. Of these the gods were the younger, the devils the older. They were struggling with each other for these worlds. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1:3, 1.)

The Vedas are a conqueror's religion. The fire worshipers soon developed into polytheists, necromancers, and magicians, endowing their spells, sacrifices, and mantras with more power than even the gods possess. All the later, typically Hindu, forms of worship and conduct are absent in the Vedas. We do not find expressed there the theory of *samsara*, or reincarnation; the law of karma; widow-burning; child-marriage; nor phallic worship. There was no idolatry, for in Vedic times the invaders did not build special, permanent temples to hold images. They performed their worship upon fire altars erected in the open, or expressed their devotion by the drinking or libation of the sacred soma juice. The earliest worship was family worship, the father, acting as priest, tending the fire and saying the prayers. Later, as the rules and prayers for sacrifice increased and became complex, a professional priest caste came into existence, whose members were paid for their services. As prayer changed to conjuration (as

[3] *Hindu Scriptures,* Nicol Macnicol, ed. (London, 1938), and *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East* (New York, 1917), IX.

in the Atharva-Veda), they became sorcerers. This important aspect of Hindu worship has always been minimized. The attempt to manipulate natural forces (i.e., magic) is an integral part of yoga, ritual, and prayer, superseding whatever spiritual aspirations may have been present.

The following excerpts are from the *Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, Vol. XLII of *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford, 1897). This excellent collection, edited by Max Müller, is readily available. But it is rarely if ever quoted by those contemporary Eastern or Western writers who rhapsodize on the spiritual significance of the four Vedas. They do not quote it; for if the four Vedas are divine, or "sung forth by Brahma," the fourth Veda strikes a discordant note indeed.[4] In it are hundreds of charms against disease, injury, sinful deeds, jealousy, and losing at dice and other games; to secure power and glory, success in business and love; to affirm the superiority of brahmins and kings; and many battle charms, curses, and mantras for the recovery of lost property. These tell us more about the main fears and preoccupations of the early Aryans than many of the other sacred texts.

Imprecations in the interest of the Brahmins:

> The Brahmanas have sharp arrows, are armed with missiles, the arrow which they hurl goes not in vain; pursuing him with their holy fire and their wrath, even from afar, do they pierce him.

[4] The Atharva-Veda is considered divine in Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad 2:4, 10 and the Maitri Upanishad 6:32.

The one hundred and one persons whom the earth did cast off, because they had injured the offspring of a Brahmana, were ruined irretrievably.

As a reviler of the gods does he live among mortals, having swallowed poison, he becomes more bone [than flesh]. He that injureth a Brahmana, whose kin are the gods, does not reach heaven by the road of the Fathers.

They who spat upon the Brahmana, who desired tribute from him, they sit in the middle of a pool of blood, chewing hair.

When the king, weening himself mighty, desires to destroy the Brahmana, then royal power is dissipated, where the Brahmana is oppressed. (pp. 170f.)

Charm to bring about submission to one's will:

Your minds, your purposes, your plans, do we cause to bend. Ye persons yonder, that are devoted to other purposes, we cause you to comply.

With my mind do I seize your minds: do ye with your thoughts follow my thought! I place your hearts in my control: come ye, directing your way after my course! I have called upon heaven and earth, I have called upon the goddess Sarasvati, I have called upon both Indra and Agni: may we succeed in this, O Sarasvati. (pp. 138f.)[5]

An incantation to make a woman sterile:

The other enemies conquer with might; beat back, O Gatavedas, those that are not yet born! Enrich this kingdom unto happiness, may all the gods acclaim this man!

Of these hundred entrails of thine, as well as of the thousand canals, of all these have I closed the openings with a stone.

[5] Compare the "Incantation and Ceremony for the Attainment of a Great Wish," Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad, 6:3, 1-13; "The Procuring of a Special Prize," Kaushitaki Upanishad, 2:3.

The upper part of the womb do I place below, there shall come to thee neither offspring nor birth! I render thee sterile and devoid of offspring; a stone do I make into a cover for thee. (p. 98)

Charm for depriving a man of his virility:

As the best of the plants thou art reputed, O herb: turn this man for me to-day into a eunuch that wears his hair dressed!

Turn him into a eunuch that wears his hair dressed, and into one that wears a hood! Then Indra with a pair of stones shall break his testicles both!

O eunuch, into a eunuch thee I have turned; O castrate, into a castrate thee I have turned; O weakling, into a weakling thee I have turned! A hood upon his head, and a hair-net do we place.

The two canals, fashioned by the gods, in which a man's power rests in thy testicles. . . . I break them with a club.

As women break reeds for a mattress with a stone, thus do I break thy member. (pp. 108f.)

Charm to promote virility:

Thee, the plant, which the Gandharva dug up for Varuna, when his virility had decayed, thee, that causest strength, we dig up.

Ushas (Aurora), Surya (the sun), and this charm of mine; the bull Pragapati (the lord of creatures) shall with his lusty fire arouse him!

This herb shall make thee so very full of lusty strength, that thou shalt, when thou art excited, exhale heat as a thing on fire!

The fire of the plants, and the essence of the bulls shall arouse him! Do thou, O Indra, controller of bodies, place the lusty force of men into this person!

Thou (O herb) art the first-born sap of the waters and also of the plants. Moreover thou art the brother of Soma, and the lusty force of the antelope buck!

Now, O Agni, now, O Savitar, now, O goddess Sarasvati, now, O Brahmanaspati, do thou stiffen the pasas as a bow!

I stiffen thy pasas as a bowstring upon the bow. Embrace thou (women) as the antelope buck the gazelle with ever unfailing (strength)!

The strength of the horse, the mule, the goat and the ram, moreover the strength of the bull bestow upon him, O controller of bodies (Indra)! (pp. 31f.)

Counter-charms:

He that shall curse us when we do not curse, and he that shall curse us when we do curse, him do I hurl to death as a bone to a dog upon the ground. (p. 93)

He, O ye gods, who prepares a spell, and carries it to the house of one that knows not (of it), upon him the spell, returning, shall fasten itself like a suckling calf upon its mother!

The person that prepares evil at home, and desires with it to harm another, she is consumed by fire, and many stones fall upon her with a loud crash.

Bestow curses, O thou (apamarga), that hast a thousand homes, upon the (demons) visikha ("crestless"), and vigriva ("crooked neck")! Turn back the spell upon him that has performed it, as a beloved maid (is brought) to her lover! (p. 70)

The god-begotten plant, hated by the wicked, which wipes away the curses (of the enemies), like water a foul spot it has washed away all curses from me.

The curse of the rival and the curse of the kinswoman, the

curse which the Brahman shall utter in wrath, all that (do thou put) under our feet!

Protect me, protect my offspring, protect our goods; let not ill-will overcome us, let not hostile schemes overcome us!

The curse shall go to the curser; joint possession shall we have with the friend. Of the enemy who bewitches with (his) eye we hew off the ribs. (p. 91)

As the translator Maurice Bloomfield puts it in his Introduction to the *Hymns of the Atharva-Veda:*

Again and again it is stated that the purohita, guru, or brahman of a king, the chaplain or house-priest, shall be conversant with the Atharvan writings, shall be an Atharvan priest, and this claim . . . is supported to some extent by later Brahmanical treatises not derived from the Atharvan schools.

Even the most superficial reading of the Four Vedas will disclose the gradual change of this nature religion from the simplicity of its hymns in praise of the deified forces of nature, to the black magic of the curses of the Atharva-Veda.

The Brahmanas, the second large body of sacred scriptures, mark the appearance (approximately 1000 to 800 B.C.) of dogmatism and sacerdotalism in India. They are commentaries on the Vedas (each Veda has one or more Brahmanas) formulated by Brahmins for Brahmins. They are particularly guides to correct procedure at religious sacrifices. They also speculate as to the origin and meaning of the sacrifices, frequently using as illustrations old legends and stories.

An interesting idea is encountered in the Brahmanas, namely, that the gods were mortals themselves until they extorted immortality from the supreme being by sacrifices and austerities.[6]

This concept made a deep impression upon India; for the austerities of yoga are supposed to make the yogin equal to and even superior to the gods. The Brahmanas formulated this idea very clearly:

> Verily there are two kinds of gods; for the gods themselves assuredly are gods, and then the priests who have studied and teach Vedic lore are the human gods.[7]

At that time the Brahmins asserted that the Vedas were of divine authority, revealed. The Brahmanas also teach that the caste system is not merely the invention of the Indo-Aryans, but divine law, rigid, immutable, and unbridgeable.[8]

The Brahmanas promised immortality to those who practised the sacrifices correctly, and the more sacrifices they offered, the more elevated their future life. In the Rig-Veda the sinner is reduced to nothing, while the virtuous are rewarded with immortality. In the Brahmanas both sinners and the virtuous are reborn to reap the result

[6] Sir M. Monier-Williams, *Hinduism* (London, 1897), p. 35.

[7] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 126.

[8] "The four Varnas [or castes] are subdivided [now] into about 3,000 castes, which are in turn broken down into several 10,000's of subcastes; these latter again are split up into gotras or other exogamous groups, which finally are divisible into kulas or families."—William H. Gilbert, Jr., *Peoples of India* (Smithsonian Institution: Washington, D. C., 1944), p. 59.

of their actions.[9] The Brahmanas do not clearly formulate the theory of rebirth, but lay its foundations for later development in the Upanishads. During the Brahmanic period, the oblation of food in fire and sacrifice of animals constituted the central doctrine. Thousands of animals were sacrificed daily and the northern plains were bathed in blood; for the more animals an individual offered to the gods, the greater his reward. The elaborate rituals required an organized priesthood, who oppressed the people with their demands and their claims of divine authority. The people suffered and grew weary with the endless sacrifices and rituals, and reaction set in.

The result was the more philosophical Upanishads, which taught the superiority of pure knowledge over sacrifices. It was the Upanishadic reform which inspired one of the great world religious figures—Gautama Buddha. He, too, recoiled from the Brahmanas and their teachings, breaking entirely with that tradition.

[9] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 134.

3

Upanishadic Ideals

Of all the literature of India, no collection of scriptures has made a deeper impression upon the world than the Upanishads. In point of time the Principal Upanishads are the third body of sacred Hindu texts, having been composed about 800 to 600 B.C.

The early Upanishads were a secret teaching of the Kshatriya caste. This warrior caste declared their spiritual independence from the Brahmins with the creation of this body of philosophical speculations.[1] The Upanishads (secret doctrine) are restricted to the *Dvija*, or twice-born—the higher, initiated, castes. The orthodox Hindus consider them revelations.

The Upanishads are not a systematic philosophy. Many writers have contributed to them. They are obscure and indefinite; while some are impressive in beauty and high religious aspiration, their message is largely a matter of personal interpretation. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "It is not easy to decide what the Upanisads teach."[2]

[1] "As to what you have told me, O Gautama, this knowledge has never yet come to Brahmans before you; and therefore in all the worlds has the rule belonged to the Kshatriya only."—Chandogya Upanishad, 5:3, 7; cf. Kaushitaki Upanishad, 4:19.

[2] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 139.

By themselves the Upanishads offer no synthesis, but later philosophical schools like the Vedanta and Nyaya attempted to build logically developed systems upon their amorphous speculations.

A loose string of discourses on the fate of the soul, death, origin of the world, and other ultimate questions, the Upanishads regard the Brahmanical sacrifices and rites as less important than the true knowledge of Brahman. They reinterpreted the traditional sacrifices, allegorized them, and taught that to realize the meaning of a sacrifice is as good as making one.[3] In the Upanishads knowledge has taken the place of acts or good works.

> He who knows Brahma[4] as the real, as knowledge, as the infinite . . . he obtains all desires. . . .
>
> (Taittiriya Upanishad 2:1)[5]

This is the exaltation of intuitive over empirical knowledge. This knowledge is the secret which frees, cleanses, and purifies and which overcomes evil. Unfortunately, this realization of the knowledge of the supreme Brahman enables the individual to cleanse himself even of parricide, abortion, or any other evil. As the Kaushitaki Upanishad (3:1) asserts:

[3] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 148.

[4] Brahma and Brahman (neuter) are interchangeably applied to the supreme soul of the universe. Differing from these, the name Brahma (masculine refers to the first member of the Hindu triad, viz., Brahma-Shiva-Vishnu. The Brahma is conceived of as the active creator of this universe, the demiurge. Brāhman specifically refers to the highest of the four original castes. This is interchangeable with Brahmin, used in this text to avoid confusion.

[5] Robert E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Madras, 1949), pp. 59, 283.

> So he who understands me [Indra], by no deed whatsoever of his is his world injured, not by stealing, not by killing an embryo, not by the murder of his mother, not by the murder of his father; if he has done any evil the dark color departs not from his face.[6]

Salvation is attained not by the grace of God, by sacrifices to God, nor by noble acts, but through knowledge alone, in contradiction to the popular theory of karma in which every deed, evil or good, will incur its just reward. This is the Upanishadic emancipation from Brahmin as well as from popular pressures. Brahman dwells in both the killer and the killed—this is the supreme secret. How can any one kill the universal essence? In the Katha Upanishad (2:18, 19) this is clearly formulated:

> The wise one [i.e. the soul, the *atman*, the self] is not born, nor dies. / This one has not come from anywhere, has not become anyone. / Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval, this one / Is not slain when the body is slain. / If the slayer think to slay, / If the slain think himself slain, / Both these understand not. / This one slays not, nor is slain.

It is this concept, incidentally, which underlies the famous second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita.[7] It had been taken from this Upanishad and placed in the mouth of Krishna. Needless to say, this theory expresses the morality of the warrior caste, for it is they who did the killing.

The hymns of the four Vedas did not furnish knowledge of God. The Brahmanas, in their emphasis upon ritual

[6] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 321.
[7] *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East,* IX, 125.

and sacrifice, were not concerned with knowledge but only with efficacious acts, and chained the people to their mediatorial offices. The Upanishads expressed a desire for freedom and reform in an attempt to push further into the mysteries of life and of God. They mark the inward turn of many thinkers of that period, who endeavored to find the ultimate Brahman by intuition, reason, and discussion while paying lip service to the classic Vedas.[8] The Brahmin, or priest caste, had to accept this philosophic contribution of the Kshatriya caste into the body of sacred scriptures and dignified it by declaring the Upanishads inspired by God. Yet when a Kshatriya philosopher like Gautama Buddha asserted that one may philosophize without the Vedas altogether, or reach salvation by one's own effort through right knowledge, he was attacked as a heretic. As we know, Buddhism did not survive in India for long.

The thinkers of the Upanishads discovered that Brahman, the Ultimate, is identical with Atman, the individual soul—that outer reality corresponds to inner reality. All is one, all is Brahman, thus said the various philosophers of the Upanishads. This theory, monism, was their great discovery and revelation, to be communicated only to trusted disciples in the solitude and secrecy of the forests.

> The supreme mystery in the Veda's End [Vedanta],
> Which has been declared in former time,

[8] In the Mundaka Upanishad (I:5). The four Vedas are considered *lower* knowledge: higher knowledge is the perception of the Imperishable.

Should not be given to one not tranquil,
Nor again to one who is not a son or a pupil.
(Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI:23)[9]

The ultimate is personalized as Ishvara and its will as Hiranyagharbha. Only mystics can realize the ultimate unity between the individual and the eternal which leads to bliss, freedom, and immortality.

The Upanishadic philosophy, monism, fostered the theory of nonaction, of refraining from good or bad actions; for all actions are fetters of the soul which must be accounted for in later lives. Only true knowledge of Brahman will give peace. The absorption in the undifferentiated Brahman without qualities of any kind is the goal; although that Brahman does not act or think or feel, union with it is thought to be pure joy.

Here is manifest the typical negative attitude of India toward action and toward life itself. The various creation theories enunciated are secondary to the prime motif: How to escape the fetters of corporeal existence and the actions which hinder union between individual and absolute soul.[10]

The doctrine of reincarnation in the Upanishads is held to be a Kshatriya doctrine, and it was they who divulged it to the Brahmin caste.[11] It was instrumental in freezing the caste system and in keeping the people from progress and freedom in this life. It is the most convenient method

[9] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 411.
[10] "The Sage is no longer connected with action of any kind."—Swami Sivananda, *Brahma Sutras*, p. 26.
[11] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

known to rationalize away all social and economic ills. All conditions in this life are simply consequences of acts done by the soul in a former life. There is free will to act—yet no free will, since every act is conditioned by a previous act or cause. The individual has no power over karma because the cause of his present predicament is not remembered by him in this life. This theory led also to various later speculations on the creation of the universe and cycles of life; this universe is the result of the karma accumulated in a previous cycle of the universe which is the result of causes accumulated in a previous one, and so *ad infinitum.* Thus all causes recede into infinity, all responsibilities are relegated to an unknown past, and the reality of this life, earth, or moral obligation, vanishes with it.

Some of the Upanishads teach that knowledge liberates, but others teach that karma, or samsara, holds us back. The theory of knowledge therefore contradicts the theory of deed or action.

> Some go into a womb
> For the embodiment of a corporeal being.
> Others go into a stationary thing
> According to their deeds (*karman*), according to their knowledge. (Katha Upanishad, V:7)

> Accordingly, those who are of pleasant conduct here—the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a pleasant womb, either the womb of a Brahman, or the womb of a Kshatriya, or the womb of a Vaisya. But those who are of stinking conduct here—the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcaste. (Chandogya Upanishad, V:10-7)[12]

[12] Hume, *op. cit.,* pp. 357, 233.

In the Upanishads are expressed the great hopes of India to escape the chains of Karma, and to lose oneselves in Brahman. It is both a hope and a lament, with the tragic notes predominating. Its philosophy, or better, its point of view, is well expressed by the following pessimistic lamentation.

> Sir, in this ill-smelling, unsubstantial body, which is a conglomerate of bone, skin, muscle, marrow, flesh, semen, blood, mucus, tears, rheum, feces, urine, wind, bile, and phlegm, what is the good of enjoyment of desires? In this body, which is afflicted with desire, anger, covetousness, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation from the desirable, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, senility, death, disease, sorrow, and the like, what is the good of enjoyment of desires?
>
> And we see that this whole world is decaying, as these gnats, mosquitoes, and the like, the grass, and the trees, that arise and perish. . . .
>
> In this sort of cycle of existence [*samsara*] what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when a man has fed on them there is seen repeatedly his return here to earth?
>
> Be pleased to deliver me. In this cycle of existence I am like a frog in a waterless well. Sir, you are our way of escape!
>
> (Maitri Upanishad, I:3)[13]

The Upanishads as a whole are the most profound documents of the speculative genius of India. They contain many beautiful and thought-provoking ideas, together with deeply pessimistic and antisocial concepts which have retarded the free expression, education, and evolution of the Indian people. Dr. Radhakrishnan sums up their contribution in the following words:

[13] Hume, *op. cit.*, pp. 413f.

> Instead of establishing new values for life, they tended to propagate the traditional ones. . . . The sacrificial religion was still the dominating force; the Upanisads only added respectability to it. . . . If the idealism of the Upanisads had permeated the masses, there would have been a great remodelling of the racial character and a regeneration of social institutions. But neither of these things happened. The lower religion with much of superstition prevailed. The priesthood became powerful. . . . It was an age of spiritual contradiction and chaos. The teaching of the Upanisads became so flexible as to embrace within it the most diverse forms of doctrine from a refined idealism to a crude idolatry. The result was that the higher religion was swamped by the lower.[14]

This expresses succinctly our initial thesis that there was no true progress, philosophically speaking, but that a constant motif in the Indian religions, like the tide, ebbs and flows back over the same ground.

These three collections of scriptures, the Vedas, Brahmanas, and Upanishads, are the sacred books of India. Only these are considered in late Hindu thought to be inspired by God. Other systems, philosophies, laws, etc., are not considered revealed, although Indian writers try to bring them into harmony with the classic body of religious teachings.

[14] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 265.

4

The Post-Upanishadic Philosophies

The six philosophical systems called Darshanas (*c.* sixth century B.C. to eighth century A.D.?) do not alter the picture. They define and refine, but radical change was left to the only great reformer of India, Gautama Buddha. If the thirteen Principal Upanishads had been logical philosophical systems it would have been unnecessary to develop from them the different Darshanas called the Shat Shastras, or "Six Instruments of True Teaching."

Of the six Darshanas, or systems, the Vedanta school and Yoga have always been the most influential in India. But there is the logical school, Nyaya, which attempts syllogistically and logically to remove "false notions" and thereby evade rebirth. The supplementary Vaisheshika school investigates the physical universe, its qualities (gunas), acts, etc. It proposes a theory of the formation of the world from the aggregation of atoms—the atoms being defined as "something existing, having no cause and eternal." [1] It is dualistic, for it admits eternal atoms existing side by side with eternal souls or the supreme soul.

The Sankhya school is categorically dualistic. It refutes

[1] Monier-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

the notion that impure matter could evolve from pure spirit. It postulates an eternally existing essence, Prakriti, from which everything else evolved. It speaks of three distinct qualities: goodness, or purity (sattva); passion, or activity (rajas); and darkness, or stolidity (tamas). They are the three elements of which Prakriti is constituted. Man has all three qualities, but the predominance of one or the other will make him noble (sattva), or brutal and bestial (tamas). Prakriti is conceived of as female, while the eternal individual soul, Purusha, is male, and the two seek to unite. Later developments of this popular theory speak of the female essence as shakti; she becomes an independent creative goddess, or the creative aspect, consort of male gods.

The Mimansa system consists of interpretations of the Vedas and Brahmanas. It attempts to solve the problems arising out of conflicting readings of the Vedas, and proceeds by logical method. It asserts that the Vedas are their own authority and that they were eternally existing, independent of a divine revealer—in other words, atheistic. The Mimansa school believes in the specific value of the sounds of mantras (hymns and spells) and that there is an eternal connection between sound, sense, and word. Their belief in an eternal sound underlying all temporary sounds led to sound magic.[2]

[2] " 'Let me obtain immortality for the gods by singing'—thus should one obtain with his singing. 'Let me obtain oblation for the fathers by singing, hope for men, grass and water for cattle, a heavenly world for the sacrificer, food for myself (*atman*)'—one should sing the Stotra carefully, meditating these things in mind." (Chandogya Upanishad, 2:22, 2; cf. 1:1, 10; 13:1-4; 2:1-4).

The Vedanta school is purely monistic. It does not teach the existence of the individual soul as distinct from the universal soul. It formulated the doctrine of maya, or illusion; the universe exists, but it is only the illusion of the one eternal essence which is at once existence, knowledge, and joy. The pure being of the Vedantists is without action, consciousness, or attributes. The external world, personal souls, and even Ishvara, the personal aspect of god, are just illusions, maya (also magic), or false knowledge and ignorance. It is a pantheism, and in its extreme application leads to the cessation of all activities, moral or physical, and of all improvements; for if everything is God, everything is not only good, but we ourselves are gods, hence perfect.

The Yoga system is the least philosophical of the six Darshanas. It teaches techniques with which the individual soul may reach union with the universal soul. Its aims are to subdue the emotions, psyche, body, and mind, until the individual is completely absorbed in the absolute. It teaches various methods of contemplation and meditation. Yoga believes that the chanting of the mystic syllable OM is an effective means of gaining knowledge of the supreme. There are eight means of concentration and certain basic body postures. This popular technique was developed in medieval Hinduism and has since been adopted by practically all sects.

The Yoga system as codified by Patanjali consists of four small books, collections of terse aphorisms. The books are Concentration, Means of Attainment, Super-

normal Powers, and Isolation. This system does promise fantastic powers to the yogin who practices its techniques, but is far less elaborate than the later Yoga schools which promise its devotees immortality, omnipotence, and omniscience. Modern books on Yoga often list five or more different systems, with hundreds of positions for allegedly incredible feats, such as Hatha Yoga (body control), Raja Yoga (mental control), Mantra Yoga (spells and prayers), Laya Yoga (mergence into universal sound), Jnana Yoga (knowledge), Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Agni Yoga, and others.[3]

Yoga rejects life in favor of the inactive state. Complete absorption (samadhi) is the highest state attainable; all bodily functions are at rest, and the mind is withdrawn and thoughtless, absorbed in the realm of nonliving, nonstrife and absolute peace. In a land like India, teeming with people, divided into countless castes, where even the temples are overburdened with sculptures and ornaments, the yogin alone raises himself over the masses and above caste by his tremendous effort to still the mind with the mind.[4] He seeks to escape, at least mentally, from the severe demands of active participation. His ideal is to merge with the plane of nonexistence, the true Nirvana,

[3] Cf. Alain Danielou, *Yoga* (London, 1949).

[4] "For by tranquility (*prasada*) of thought / Deeds (*karman*), good and evil, one destroys! / With soul (*atman*) serene, stayed on the Soul (*Atman*), / Delight eternal one enjoys!"

"But when the mind has been dissolved, / And there is the joy whose only witness is the self– / That is Brahma, the immortal, the pure! / That is the way! That indeed is the world!" (Maitri Upanishad, 6:20, 6:24).

which is the cessation of all sensations, physical and mental, a state of death in life. The manifested universe and all biological life is thought an illusion which must be overcome at all costs.

For thousands of years the Indian philosophers have endeavored to find ways and means not to improve life but to overcome, reject, and forget it.

The post-Upanishadic period produced not only the six systems of philosophy but primitive Buddhism, the greatest spiritual revolution of India, which will be discussed in Part II in relation to Christianity.

After the impact of Buddhism upon Indian philosophy we enter the epic period, and following that, the eclectic period, or medieval Hinduism. The epic period witnessed the emergence of the pseudo-histories, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the law code of Manu and the Puranas, or ancient tales. These are sectarian books in which the prevailing faith in a particular deity is celebrated. As the population of India increased, so did the systems, gods and religious books, in great profusion. After Buddhism and Jainism there are no other great and original systems in India, only more and more sects with their individual elaborations of the eternal song of India: how to overcome life (yoga), how to placate the hosts of deities (puja), and how to evade positive action (vedanta). Ancient local deities were raised to positions of supremacy by their sectarian devotees; in medieval Hinduism the fusion between the indigenous forms of worship, such as snake (naga) worship, phallic (lingam) worship, and female

(shakti or yoni) worship, all but overcame the earlier modes of Hindu religion.

Shakti worship, or devotion to the creative female consorts of the male gods, is probably the lowest level reached by medieval Hinduism. The phenomenon of the gradual elevation of the female element is encountered also in other countries, for instance the worship in Mesopotamia of Ishtar and Astarte; in Egypt, Isis; in Persia, Anahita; in Phoenicia, Ashtoreth; in Greece, Aphrodite; in China and Japan, Kwan Yin; and in India, Mahashakti, Durga, Kali, and others. In spite of the great antiquity of this notion, elevating the female aspect to a supreme position has lowered most religions. In Babylon it led to excesses of sacred prostitution, while in India and Tibet it led to the erotic frenzies of the Tantrics.

Thus, by the early centuries of our era, the main tendencies of the Indian mind and social structure were well established. The popular Bhagavad-Gita was written, and Mahayana Buddhism had started its exodus from India and conquest of the Far East. The caste system was sanctioned by the Code of Manu, and India turned for inspiration to its classic period, already legendary and celebrated by the Mahabharata. During this period, the closing years of the Roman Empire, the main characteristics of the Western mind were also well established, and the great ideas that have inspired the Western mind had made their appearance.

5

Sources of Western Culture

Hellenism in one great sweep touched both the East and the West, and for one short moment the two seemed to be linked. Greek art was brought to India and Mithraism to the West. The Hellenistic Buddha statues of the Gandhara school are witnesses to the impact of the Hellenistic mind on India. Perhaps Mahayana Buddhism would never have emerged as a popular religion except for this contact. It is probable, however, that the Greeks even before the time of Alexander the Great had sporadic contact with India. The reincarnation theory of Pythagoras seems to have been derived from there, but we can see from Xenophanes' famous poem that the Greeks did not take this theory too seriously.[1]

After the time of Alexander, many mystery religions made their appearance in Europe, notably, Mithraism, that formidable rival of primitive Christianity which had inspired Alexander's soldiers and the Roman legionnaires. Orphism gained many adherents among the Greeks, and

[1] Of Pythagoras and the Dog: "Once he was passing by an ill-used pup, And pitied it, and said (or so they tell) Stop, do not thrash it! 'tis a dear friend's soul: I recognized it when I heard it yell."—Sir Wm. Marris, translator, *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation* (Oxford, 1950), p. 226.

Gnosticism, the most eclectic cult of antiquity, found great favor among the polyglot population of the Greco-Roman cities.

Those who overemphasize the orientalization of Greece do not take into consideration the growth of Greek science and philosophy which became ever more objective as the cults became subjective. Even Judaism, which clashed with Hellenism during the Maccabean war and emerged victorious over Antiochus IV, proselytized among the Hellenistic people, and through Philo Judeus achieved the synthesis between Hebrew monotheism and Platonic philosophy.[2] The fathers of primitive Christianity, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Lactantius, Hippolytus, Arnobius of Sicca, and others, were brilliant scholars. They were familiar with Greek mythology, philosophy and logic. Patristic literature is shot through with learned remarks about Greek culture. The most articulate men of the period of the primitive and early church saw Christianity with eyes that were schooled in Greek philosophy.

It is a truism that the Western mind found itself in Greece, for there lies the beginning of Western philosophy, politics and science. Insofar as we follow the Greek pattern we are Western. We have progressed considerably since the first Milesian philosophers attempted to find scientific answers for the mysteries of life, but their stamp of scientific-objective thought is still upon culture, as are

[2] Abram L. Sacher, *A History of the Jews* (New York, 1948), pp. 102-105, 110.

the moral consistency of Socrates and the logic of Aristotle, and their magnificent exaltation of the individual. Those, together with Periclean democracy and Platonic idealism, are among the highest achievements of the Western mind.

The so-called orientalization of Christianity started only after it became a state religion under Theodosius I in A.D. 380, when certain elements of the Hellenistic mystery cults entered its ritual. Before that date the primitive church was severely ascetic. It had no crucifixes or icons. The doctrine of the Mother of God, Theotokos, was as yet unformulated. The Nicene Creed dates from this century. The emotionalism which characterized the medieval Latin church was yet absent. During the first centuries of our era, we find the Christian doctrine spreading in a highly idealistic milieu; the primitive church was still acquainted with Greek culture, if not directly, as were the Fathers, at least indirectly through Stoicism and other schools flourishing in Italy.

Elements of Greek philosophy were present in Christianity not only in Byzantium but in western and northern Europe. The Platonic tradition through St. Augustine and Martin Luther has come to be associated more with Protestantism than with modern Catholicism, since the latter has always put a heavy stress on the Aristotelian antecedents of Thomas of Aquinas.

There is indeed a powerful tradition of Greek philosophy in both Catholicism and Protestantism. Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk. He lived by the rules of St.

Augustine, who had been deeply steeped in the Neoplatonism taught by Plotinus in Rome. There is something of Plato in Luther, who knew no higher authority than that of God himself. It is noteworthy that Luther exalted Paul and the Gospel of John over the rest of the New Testament. Paul was the most Hellenistic of the early apostles, and John wrote the most Platonic gospel, concerned with the Logos, eternity, and the divinity of Christ. Luther exalted the dictum of Paul that the just live by faith, and he placed the Word and faith above works and ritual. His was no synthesis between Greek philosophy and religion, as we find in Thomas Aquinas, for that was not the task he had set himself. But he brought a burning zeal, deep learning, and sincerity to his task of pruning from Christianity the externals that had grown for centuries around its spiritual essence. His reformation ushered in the modern era in northern Europe.

Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, had studied assiduously the Arabian Neo-Aristotelian philosopher Averroës whose synthesis between Aristotelianism and Mohammedanism had a more lasting influence on Catholicism than it had on Islam. Neo-Aristotelianism had all but undermined the traditional dogmas of Latin Christianity and for a while it was proscribed. Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Thomas, greatly admired Aristotle's writings, which he had surveyed carefully. He wrote a vast body of commentaries with copious quotations from Averroës, Avicenna and Maimonides. Thomas studied under Albertus Magnus in Paris. With his monumental *Summa Theologica*,

Thomas attempted the great synthesis between reason and faith, Aristotelian logic and Christian revelation. This tremendous work armed Latin Christianity against the attacks by freethinkers and differing interpretations of its dogma. It is one of the greatest bulwarks of Catholicism in its proof of God (the Immovable Mover of Aristotle) and the authority of the church. Thomas used Aristotelian concepts and terminology, and his work marked the victory of reason over medieval mysticism.

The Greek spirit had affected all Western and Near-Eastern religions. Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Catholicism, having to accept the challenge of Greece, met it in the following sequence. The first synthesis between religion and reason was by the Persian Avicenna, who, in the eleventh century, surprised the Moslem world by his immense learning and by buttressing Mohammed's teaching with Aristotelian logic. A second synthesis was accomplished by Maimonides, who, with his "Guide to the Perplexed," achieved the synthesis between Judaism and Aristotelianism. The third and last great attempt to arrive at a synthesis between religion and reason was that of Thomas. It is curious, however, that while some elements of Protestantism can be traced to the idealist Plato through St. Augustine, Catholicism based its method of teaching on the empirical, realistic Aristotelian philosophy through the Mohammedans, Averroës and Avicenna.

6

Our Near-Eastern Heritage

It is significant that the greatest achievements of mankind in religion (monotheism), ethics, politics, social liberties, philosophy and science stem from countries west of the seventy-second longitude, or to the west of India. This line intersects India and cuts off the ancient westernmost province, Sind, and the Indus River, on which were located the Dravidian cities excavated by Sir John Marshall, where Alexander's armies halted,[1] and where the Hellenized province of Bactria overlapped north India. This region, called the Hindu Kush, is imbued with Western traditions since at least prehistoric days and has served as a stepping stone for most Western invaders who entered India by the land route. The seventy-second longitude not only cuts India from the west, but beyond this line lies the Far East: Tibet, China, Burma, Siam and Japan.

No world-moving faith as spiritual as Christianity, no law as just as Roman law, no system of knowledge as objective as Greek science and no political system as advanced as democracy emerged from east of the seventy-

[1] Actually, Alexander the Great crossed the Indus and some of its smaller tributaries, but after the defeat of King Porus his armies refused to go further and he returned to Mesopotamia. (See Arrian, *History of Alexander and Indica,* The Loeb Classical Library (Harvard, 1933).

second longitude. Yet east of that line lives the majority of mankind, there are vaster forests and plains, there are greater material resources, greater wealth and the most abject poverty. India, China and Japan produced many profound mystics, philosophers and great artists but its philosophies and religions have not captured the imagination of the world—their greatest influence has been confined east of the seventy-second longitude.

At approximately the time the Aryans were destroying the castles of the indigenous population of India, sacrificing horses, and praying to the storm and wind to help them slay their enemies, in Egypt Ikhnaton was elevating monotheism to the status of a state religion, and raising the magnificent stone city with its huge temples at Tel el Amarna. The religious hymns of Egypt of that period, the 18th Dynasty, show a new spirit in society, that of man living under a benevolent god, Aton. For the first and only time in Egypt there was an attempt at naturalism in art; bas-reliefs show the young king with his children in relaxed poses, expressive of the powerful humanism that accompanied a monotheistic revolt. During a short period man achieved a personal dignity that foreshadowed the Greeks by about 850 years. The heritage of the Egyptians survives in Judeo-Christian monotheism, in architectural principles and geometry, and in some aspects of Greek art and religion. These are the roots of Western culture.

Mesopotamia, between the two rivers, suffered far more violent invasions than India, and its cultures were constantly menaced by intruders from east, west and north.

Yet the people who inhabited that coveted land loved and accepted life in its material bounty. The Sumerians and those who followed them deified the law. Rarely has a culture spent more effort at defining the relationship that exists between peoples in all domestic, commercial and political aspects. The code of Hammurabi, itself influenced by an earlier law code of the Sumerian king Ur-nammu, is at the root of Mosaic law. Instead of creating castes, subcastes and outcastes, it dealt realistically with the existing slave problem. It was a severe code indeed, but it stipulated both the price for slaves and the obligations of a slaveholder toward his property. It attempted to exercise moral pressure upon Babylonian society in business dealings (no contract was valid until signed in the presence of a witness) and bondage for debt. In case a wife and children were given as hostages for a debt unpaid, the code limited their term of servitude to three years.[2]

The code of Hammurabi was the first code to evolve and fully define the rights of private property. Of course, the criminal laws exacted an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; yet the Babylonian laws were man's first intelligent efforts to define the limitations of slavery, and to cast the activities of a complex urban society into a mold of order and justice.

Not until some 1500 years later did the Indians achieve their codification of law, the famous Code of Manu, in which the castes were held to be divinely appointed and immutable, and the law of reincarnation or gradual rebirth

[2] I. Mendelsohn, *Legal Aspects of Slavery* (Williamsport, 1932), p. 15.

from caste to caste was treated as a fact. There, the punishment for sins of act leads to rebirth in a vegetable or mineral form; for sins of word, man will take the form of bird or beast; and for sins of thought he is reborn in one of the lower castes.[3] Suttee, or widow-burning, was approved by the sacred law of India, and persisted until the English abrogated it over severe objections in 1830.[4] Besides castes and outcastes, the Code of Manu also recognized serfs and slaves as part of Hindu society.[5]

In contrast, by the middle of the third millennium B.C., both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations were highly organized and scientifically advanced. The Egyptians, unified under King Menes in 3200 B.C., had a long history of astounding achievements in architecture, sculpture, the minor arts, astronomy, calendrical arts, poetry, geometry, law, medicine, and social organization. They had no inflexible caste system; the six classes had a degree of fluidity, and the scribes were almost classless. A boy of great intelligence from one of the lower classes could rise by virtue of learning and writing ability to the highest office. The Egyptians perfected the art of writing early in their dynastic history. They invented paper, as well as many architectural principles still used, such as trabeation, the abacus block, the clerestory, and others. Before the law all Egyptians were equal. Truth was deified in the goddess Ma'at, an abstract ethical as well as metaphysical concept with religious and social implications.

[3] Monier-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
[4] Moreland and Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[5] *Ibid*, p. 30.

The Egyptians worshiped man, the individual. They lavished more attention than any other people upon the preservation of the body in graves and pyramids. They had a conception of the soul as a separate being (Ba), and of its judgment in the underworld by Osiris and Ma'at. Some of the earliest carved portraits were found in Egyptian graves, evidencing their regard for the intrinsic value and beauty of the human being. The king was god incarnate, the supreme priest. Society was constructed like a pyramid and focused in the divine ruler, yet all Egyptians had high regard for their personal worth.[6] They accepted life cheerfully, spending much time in pageantry, plays, music, and religious festivals. They were preoccupied with eternity, but without denying the demands of life and without fearing either life or death.[7] Kingship,

[6] "Do not terrify the people: for if thou dost God will punish thee.
"If any man says that he will live by this means: God will make his mouth empty of food.
"Let no man terrify the people: for it is the will of God that they shall be content.
"If thou dost humble thyself and dost obey the wise: thy behaviour will be held to be good before God.
"Treat thy dependents as well as thou art able: for this is the duty of those whom God has blessed.
"Be not harsh in respect of grain: for thou art only an overseer of the food of God."—M. A. Murray, *Egyptian Religious Poetry* (London, 1949), p. 113.

[7] "Behold the dwellings of the dead! Their walls fall down; their place is no more; they are as though they never existed. That which has come into being must pass away again. The young men and maidens must go to their places. The sun riseth at dawn and setteth again in the West. Men beget, women conceive. The children too go to the places which are appointed for them. O then, be happy! Come, scents and perfumes are set before thee; *mahu*-flowers and lilies for the arms of thy beloved. Come, songs and music are before thee. Set behind thee all thy cares; think only upon gladness, until the day

life, and the afterlife were envisioned as utterly stable, and the whole universe was divided by the Egyptians into an almost architectural, static arrangement. The arts of Egypt express this very well, for we find as many heroic, stylized statues of kings and bas-reliefs in the graves as naturalistic portrayals of the hunt, frescoes illustrating everyday life, dancing girls, animals, and beautifully carved and inlaid articles. The minor arts—jewelry, pottery, cabinet-making, and others—were accorded a high place in the Egyptian scheme of life.

Even before the monotheistic revolt of Ikhnaton, ancestor worship and polytheism had merged into a religion of high philosophical aspiration, of a timeless, uncreated, benevolent and protecting god.[8] Ikhnaton's monotheism (fourteenth century B.C.), one of the greatest flashes of Western genius, followed the Hyksos invasion from Syria, about 1750 B.C.

Not long after Egyptian dynastic history began, in the time of Menes, about 3200 B.C., the peoples of the Mesopotamian plain invented phonetic writing, rolling

cometh whereon thou shall go down to the land that loveth silence." —Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 107f.

[8] "Beginning of existence in the beginning of Time. Amon existed from the beginning, none know his emergence. No god existed before him, no other god was with him who could tell his form. He had no mother to name him, no father to beget him and say, 'This is I.' He shaped his egg himself. Force, mysterious of birth, creator of his own beauty, God, Divine One, self-created. All gods came into existence after he began."

"Though I have sinned, yet the Lord showed compassion. His wrath abides not through the day; his anger endures but a moment, it passes utterly away, and in mercy he turns his face again."—Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 90.

seals, metal smelting, glazed bricks, the arch, the vault, and perhaps the dome. They had a diversified agriculture, mass-produced pottery on pottery wheels, and large luxurious cities upon gigantic platforms in the center of which were tremendous stepped pyramids, or ziggurats. Their trade was far-flung, and minutely regulated by law.

These life-affirming, positive peoples arranged their whole life, business, entertainment, and art around the temple. Contracts were signed there, and musicians entertained the visitors. They made their religion part of everyday activities and the temple their social center. Learned traditions were developed in schools attached to the temples. Their large collections of inscribed tablets, which were lent to other temples, were similar to our public libraries.

The church, or temple, as a cultural, civic, and religious center, has become part of the Western tradition. Our seven-day week we owe to the Chaldeans, together with the signs of the zodiac and the arithmetical process of multiplication. The Code of Hammurabi underlies the Mosaic Code, although the Jews went on to develop the highest ethical code of antiquity, and limited the period of slavery to seven years, after which any slave became free.[9]

[9] Compare this to the inhuman slave legislation of the Code of Manu: "But a Sudra, whether bought or unbought, he [the Brahmin] may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the self-existent (Svayambhu) to be the slave of a Brahmana.

"A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?

"A Brahmana may confidently seize the goods of (his) Sudra; for, as that (slave) can have no property, his master may take his possessions." —VIII:413-417, *Sacred Books of the East,* vol. 25.

The flood story, of Sumerian origin, diffused to both east and west, crops up in the epics of many peoples. Through the Etruscans the architectural principles of Mesopotamia were carried to Rome, and astronomy and astrology found their way westward from Babylon. The three revealed religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, most of the early significant technological inventions, writing, fired clay, astronomy, mathematics and law stem from the fertile crescent, west of India. Objective science, humanized art, and the great philosophical systems that have affected our culture stem from Greece, the most "Western" nation of antiquity.

7

Our Greco-Roman Heritage

As we have shown earlier, Greek philosophy is inextricably linked to Christianity in the latter's primitive as well as later forms. The Judeo-Christian tradition which combines so much of the thoughts of both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian peoples has been tempered by Greek philosophy. It is Western in its optimism and affirmation of life, in its exaltation of the dignity of the individual, in its recognition of the rights of women and children and the dignity of labor, in its refutation of the spiritual rights of privileged castes, and in granting the universality of salvation regardless of race, color, caste, or sex.

The Greek attitude toward life, which we have inherited, has conditioned our culture through various channels: religion, philosophy, science, art, drama, politics, and sport. During the sixth century B.C., about the time of the Upanishads, natural philosophy was born in the Greek city of Miletus. To the Greeks, philosophy was not divorced from science; one inspired the other. The Greeks did not separate the theoretical from the practical, the demands of the body from the demands of the mind, nor sports from art. They had a genius for unification, not only responding to a variety of influences and stimuli, but weld-

ing them together and perfecting them to a degree hitherto unknown.

In the Upanishads we find certain suggestions as to the nature of the universe, culminating in the pantheistic doctrine that everything is Brahman and life is an illusion. Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, started with life and ended with God, affirming both. The different theories of the Milesian school, whether that of Thales, that everything is water; or of Anaximander, that life is an evolutionary process starting with fish and culminating in man; or of Heraclitus, that the first principle is fire; were all based upon empirical objective evidence from which were deduced the individual theories. Thales, the father of Greek science, was reputed to have made a fortune in olive oil, displaying the often-practical bent of the Greek thinkers.

As early as 800 B.C., the concept of the Greek city-state emerged, and within 200 years the first democracy in the world was set up in Athens. Those who cite Greek slavery as retarding factors of Greek political life tend to overlook the well-known fact that Solon, who was both a reformer and a tyrant, offered all aliens who lived in Athens their citizenship in 594 B.C. Furthermore, Cleisthenes, the father of Athenian democracy, granted full rights to all freemen who lived in Athens in 510 B.C. This is a far cry from oriental despotism and the "divinely appointed" caste system, from a whole nation's three thousand years of virtual bondage to the ruling castes. Where but in Greece and Rome could slaves become rich merchants, freedmen, and eventually generals? Where but in

Greece and Rome was a slave treated humanely, taken into the family, or, as in Rome, permitted to educate the children of wealthy patricians and himself attain positions of power and prestige? Where but in Greece and Rome did a spiritual revolution proselytize first among the so-called slaves, preaching equality of all men?

The Indian philosophers argued man out of existence, proclaiming the doctrine of maya, or illusion. The Greek philosophers of the fifth century placed man in the center of all their studies and proclaimed him the measure of all things. While the Indians continued their casuistry for thousands of years, the Greeks within a few hundred years arrived, through philosophy, at lasting scientific and social contributions. One of the characteristics of Greek philosophers is that many were at the same time eminent scientists and mathematicians. The Western mind did not sink into the quicksand of endless speculations, but always attempted to test them and where possible to put them into practice. This is the reason objective science had its inception in Greece, culminating in the efflorescence of the school of Alexandria where about 200 B.C. Hero invented the steam engine, the siphon, and various precision instruments. Ctesibius was famous for his mechanical water organ, his water clock, artillery pieces working by compressed air, and a double-action water pump which was utilized in fire engines. Archimedes, one of the greatest engineers and mathematicians of Greece, constructed a planetarium which reproduced all the unequal and different movements of the heavenly bodies, and perfected

compound pulleys, weight-throwing machines, and other important inventions. Yet he considered his practical attainments unimportant beside his purely theoretical contributions.[1]

The Indian philosophies, including the six Darshanas, are not systems but fragments, for they deal only with metaphysics. The gigantic systems of Plato and Aristotle attempt to encompass the total human experience in its metaphysical, political, ethical, scientific, moral and esthetic aspects. The Greeks honored religion without denying life or the loveliness of the human body, which they exalted in the Olympic games and in art.

During the Periclean Age, those fifty short years of splendor after the Athenians defeated the Persians, philosophers and artists put man squarely in the center of all their concern. The city honored Athena Parthenos, the virgin protectress of Athens, by erecting in her name the magnificent Parthenon, but paid more respect to Phidias, who supervised its decoration, and to Pericles who set aside tax money to beautify Athens. During this second half of the fifth century, art achieved a perfect balance between naturalism and idealism, and between expressive values and technical perfection. The gods were humanized in literature and in art, and man, the moral individual of Socrates, attained a position of honor and dignity that was never achieved in the East and hardly equalled in the West.

Plato dreamt of a social Utopia, and whether or not

[1] Benjamin Farrington, *Greek Science* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1949).

we would like life in his Republic, his perfect state on earth is one of the great edifices of political theory. Typically enough, Plato thought in terms of life, society, and justice. He admits three social classes, but emphatically rejects the hereditary principle, his social hierarchy depending solely upon education and culminating in the wise philosopher-king.

The Athenians surrounded themselves with beauty. With their hands and minds they perfected the Greek temple in subtle mathematical relationships. Their everyday pottery was elegant, decorated with mythological or mundane scenes. They found their inspiration in art and drama, in the palestra, in philosophical discussion in the market square, and in participation in politics. In this way their life became artful and significant.

To Aristotle, mere existence, regardless of its quality, was better than nonexistence. Such affirmation of life, typically Western, is diametrically opposed to the Indian position which argues that existence, even if privileged, is either an illusion or a fetter, and at any rate a tragedy.

With the contributions of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece and their confluence in Greco-Roman culture, the main tendencies of the Western mind were established. The Judeo-Christian tradition perpetuates some of the ideas that were originated by these cultures. The full development of Roman law and the emergence of Christianity coincided with the epic period in India, when all philosophies of consequence had made their appearance and Hindu culture entered its eclectic phase.

Rome took the law from the priests and placed it in the hands of judges elected by the people. The praetorian court was a decisive advancement of civil law (*jus civile*), for it permitted reinterpretation of the old laws to suit the changing conditions of the growing state. The court was the Roman law, based as it was upon the statutes of the senate and the ancient customs venerated by the citizens. The law of the people (*jus gentium*) was applicable to all the inhabitants of the nation regardless of nationality.

The greatest achievement of Roman law, however, was its concept of natural law (*jus naturale*), developed under Stoic influence, on the basis of the *jus gentium*. It was described by Cicero, its great exponent, as "unchangeable, eternal, and flowing from the hearts of all men." This revolutionary departure considered *all* men equal and entitled to certain basic rights which governments have no right to transgress. It puts the law above the state, and any power which defied natural law automatically became tyrannical. This concept of abstract justice is one of the noblest achievements of Roman culture, and, together with Stoicism, it prepared the way for Christianity.

At the precise moment when India had settled into its permanent caste structure, its sacred tradition closed to any further additions, and when Brahmanism had emerged victoriously over Buddhism, tightening its hold over India once more, Christianity was preaching universal salvation, and Roman law reaffirmed the rights of all men by formulating the most equitable and just laws human society had known.

8

Through Oriental Eyes

Most modern books on Indian philosophy or religion are, alas, anthologies of anthologies. Too few Western writers have undertaken the study of Sanskrit, either to consult sources, or to verify the translations of terms which, more often than not, are rendered most fancifully. It is ironical to read again and again about the spirituality of the East in contrast to the materialism of the West. The repetition of this stock phrase simply means its users are unacquainted with either Western or Eastern tradition in philosophy, religion, law, art, social history and science. The fact that the Hindu philosophers thought the stations in life to be the result of karma, and therefore ignored[1] starving outcastes to feed sacred monkeys and cows, no more infers spirituality than the business acumen of a Quaker infers materialism.

The great tradition of English, German, French and American Sanskrit scholars has come to an end. Their place has been taken by popularizers and sentimentalists, anthologists and cultists who write more from hearsay and

[1] This typical Hindu view was transferred via Mahayana Buddhism into Tibet. "The creatures' suffering is their own work. It is useless to make thyself unhappy about it."—*Three Tibetan Mysteries*, translated by H. I. Woolf (London, n.d.), p. 26.

mistaken notions than from serious study or consultation of the standard works in this field. The achievements of Foucher, E. W. Hopkins, Monier-Williams, Rhys-Davids, Warren, Garbe, Grünwedel, Winternitz and Max Müller, to mention but a few, are still accessible in their books, but these are consulted less and less, to the detriment of objective scholarship.

The logical thing then would be to go to the source—to consult Indian scholars, especially those who have been trained in Western schools and are fortunate enough to combine Eastern tradition and languages with Western methodology and objectivity. But how frustrating an experience this proves to be. Most Indian scholars, even those trained in the West, with few exceptions are far more biased and sentimental about their heritage than our most ardent cultists. This may be excusable for swamis and yogis, but when a scholar of the eminence of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, renowned in both the East and the West, compares his heritage with ours, one would expect less partiality and less emotionalism. After a long list of admirable scholarly contributions, he published in 1939 a group of lectures given in England under the title "Eastern Religion and Western Thought." In this massive book he was not satisfied to contrast the Eastern and Western traditions in their different attitudes or attainments, as Dr. Northrop[2] has done recently with scholarly restraint. Dr. Radhakrishnan tries tediously to prove the Hindu antecedence of all religions, all philosophies, and all

[2] *The Meeting of East and West* (New York, 1949).

sciences known in the West. To do this, he repeats all the legends, rumors and myths about India, from Herodotus to the most tendentious, disillusioned Westerners who adulate India as the home of *all* sciences and *all* wisdom, celestial and terrestrial. Whether this sustained attack is meant as a repudiation of the West and all its values, or just as a panegyric of India, is hard to distinguish. However that might be, his book is an endless array of material attempting to prove that India precipitated all the basic ideas of the West, from philosophy to religion and science.[3]

These assertions by Dr. Radhakrishnan bring us back to our introductory remarks about the age-old romanticization of the Orient as the mysterious land of origins. It seems that quite a few Eastern and Western writers are affected by this "rising sun complex." We hear from another Hindu:

> Go to the rising sun in the East, not to the setting sun in the West, if you wish to see Christ in the plenitude of his glory and in the fullness and freshness of the primitive dispensation.[4]

Among many other Hindu writers before Radhakrishnan we noticed this same bias.

> It is a fact that the greatest religions of the world have sprung from Asia. It has, with some accuracy, been said, therefore, that it is an Asiatic only who can teach religion to Asiatics. . . . In

[3] This attitude is echoed by another Hindu writer, Krishnanal J. Shridharani: *Warning to the West* (New York, 1942).

[4] Keshub Chunder Sen, as quoted by P. C. Mozoomdar, *The Oriental Christ* (Boston, 1898), p. 24.

fact, Christianity was founded and developed by Asiatics in Asia.[5]

Does the writer of the above paragraph, Mr. P. C. Mozoomdar, mean to say that the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea from which Christianity sprang are Asia? Or that the Greco-Roman milieu in which Christianity developed was an Asiatic milieu? Granted that Hellenism brought into the West certain influences of oriental origin, this is not to suggest that Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, Peter, Matthew, Luke, Mark, John, and a host of other figures associated with the primitive dispensation, were Asiatics in the sense this Hindu writer employs the term. It is a well-established fact that Christianity, aside from its revelatory character, is the result of the impact of Judaism upon Greek philosophy and Greek universalism. Many Hindus would rewrite history, geography, ethnology, and philology in order to sustain their claim of having fathered all important ideas and spiritual advances of mankind.

After reading Dr. Radhakrishnan and some other Hindu writers on the West, one should like to ask why Hindu thinkers who constantly speak of the law of evolution did not produce a Darwin, or why the atomic theory proclaimed by the Vaisheshika school did not give rise to a Lord Rutherford, Enrico Fermi or Nils Bohr. Nor did India's proverbial respect for animals produce a Fabre. Unfortunately India's deep concern for the fate of man did not give the world a De La Salle, a Froebel, Pestalozzi, or

[5] Mozoomdar, *op cit.*, pp. 16, 21.

Montessori, someone to educate children married before puberty and unprotected for thousands of years. Those who talk fondly of India's contribution to science, astronomy or medicine (with the exception of the mathematical concept of zero) must fall back upon Mohammedan science, for neither Pasteur, Ehrlich, Koch, Semmelweiss, Curie, Newton, Watts, Freud, nor Marconi were high-caste Hindus. So far no Archimedes, Copernicus, Kepler, or Einstein has emerged from that country which claims to have torn the secrets from nature while the West was still in its infancy.

The only great modern reformer of India was Mohandas K. Gandhi. His great principles of equality and nonviolence were derived from anti-Brahminical Buddhism and the distinctly non-Indian doctrines of Christ, Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy.

Gandhi, as he states in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, went to London an atheist and returned to India a deist. He became a vegetarian in London, not in Bombay, through the accidental discovery of Salt's book, *Plea for Vegetarianism.*

> I read Salt's book from cover to cover and was very much impressed by it. From the date of reading this book, I may claim to have become a vegetarian by choice. I blessed the day on which I had taken the vow before my mother. I had all along abstained from meat in the interests of truth and of the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat-eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now made in favor of vegetarianism,

the spread of which henceforward became my mission. . . . A convert's enthusiasm for his new religion is greater than that of a person who is born in it. Vegetarianism was then a new cult in England, and likewise for me, because, as we have seen, I had gone there a convinced meat-eater, and was intellectually converted to vegetarianism later.[6]

The modern prophet of India's national and religious aspirations did not even know the Bhagavad-Gita, India's "New Testament," before he lived in England. He read it for the first time in the beautiful English translation by Sir Edwin Arnold, whom he knew personally and who had became a member of his vegetarian club. As Gandhi reports, he was introduced to the Gita by two English brothers, theosophists, who invited him to read it with them.

I felt ashamed, as I had read the divine poem neither in Samskrit nor in Gujarati. I was constrained to tell them that I had not read the *Gita*, but that I would gladly read it with them, and that though my knowledge of Samskrit was meagre, still I hoped to be able to understand the original to the extent of telling where the translation failed to bring out the meaning. . . . The brothers also recommended the *Light of Asia* (the life of Buddha) by Sir Edwin Arnold, whom I knew till then as the author only of *The Song Celestial*, and I read it with even greater interest than I did the Bhagavadgita.[7]

Mohandas K. Gandhi came in contact with Theosophy in London and personally met its leaders, Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant. About the same time a Bible was

[6] M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Washington, D. C., 1948), pp. 67, 79.
[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 90f.

given to him by a devout Christian from Manchester whom he had befriended in a vegetarian boarding house. The New Testament impressed him deeply, "especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart." [8]

It was in South Africa, however, that Gandhi put these newly discovered principles to the test, studying Western source books all the time.

> I read with interest Max Müller's book, *India—What Can it Teach Us?*, and the translation of the Upanishads published by the Theosophical Society. All this enhanced my regard for Hinduism and its beauties began to grow upon me. It did not, however, prejudice me against other religions. I read Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet and His Successors* and Carlyle's panegyric *On the Prophet.* These books raised Muhammad in my estimation. . . . I made too an intensive study of Tolstoy's books. *The Gospels in Brief, What to Do?* and other books made a deep impression on me. I began to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love.[9]

One of the greatest milestones in Gandhi's spiritual development occurred in South Africa when a friend of his, a Mr. Polak, pressed Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in his hands.

> The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. . . . I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. . . . I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life. . . .
> The teachings of *Unto This Last* I understood to be: 1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. 2. That

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[9] *Ibid,* p. 198.

a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. 3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.
The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto This Last* made it clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.[10]

Gandhi learned the dignity of work from Ruskin. An Englishman, Salt, converted him to vegetarianism. Sir Edwin Arnold and Max Müller converted him to Hinduism. After discovering the Russian Tolstoy, he and the German architect Hermann Kallenbach founded Tolstoy Farm, in Natal, where he developed the principles he had learned. Christianity, and the Sermon on the Mount in particular, assisted him to develop his great principle of Satyagraha, or passive resistance.

Even the Indian National Congress, of which Gandhi became the spiritual leader after his return to India, was founded by a Westerner. It was started in 1884 by a retired civil servant, A. D. Hume, at the suggestion of Lord Dufferin.[11] Gandhi's ideas, techniques, and social reforms were in principle Western and inspired by the West; so was his fight against untouchability, against child marriages, and against the traditional exclusion of women from public life. Thus the great comeback of India in which Gandhi played a paramount role owed its most im-

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 364f.
[11] H. T. Muzumdar, *Gandhi the Apostle,* pp. 82f.

portant innovations not to Hindu speculations but to Arnold, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau, and Müller, and to Christianity. Spiritually, Gandhi was a product of the West. His greatness lay in his courage to put those magnificent principles into practice on a scale never hitherto attempted.

It is regrettable that like so many Hindus before him, Gandhi reversed his opinion of the West as soon as he returned to his homeland. Since he owed his incentive and ideas for reform to the West, the following paragraph, written after his return to India, is unfortunate, although typical of the vagaries of the Hindu mind:

> The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behoves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian civilization even as a child clings to its mother's breast.[12]

In other words, Gandhi believed that "Western civilization is the creation of satan." [13]

[12] Gandhi, *Sermon on the Sea* (Chicago, 1924), p. 75.
[13] *Dharma Manthan,* as quoted by B. R. Ambedkar in *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (Bombay, 1946), p. 290.

PART II

9

Buddhism and Christianity

Thus far we have discussed certain basic differences between the Hindu and Western attitudes toward life, differences which arose at an extremely early date. It should now be interesting to compare the two most important Indian religions with Christianity in greater detail.

Westerners who read the magnificent religious poems of the East discover many seeming parallels between the ethical concepts of Buddhism and Krishnaism, and the teachings of the New Testament. Conversely, many Hindus, Chinese, and Japanese have read and studied with great interest the teachings of Jesus, and they, too, have perceived parallels with Buddhism and Krishnaism. Some of the latter have emphasized the fact that the great Eastern religious books antedate Christianity by hundreds of years, as do those of Buddhism and as does the Mahabharata, which contains the Bhagavad-Gita, or by far longer periods of time, as do the Vedas and the Upanishads. They argue, therefore, by simple precedence in time, Buddhism and Hinduism inspired Christianity. Some even say that Christ is none other than Krishna, misspelled.

It is generally accepted that, in their higher ethical aspects, all major religions converge. Those authors who

utilize such concurrences alone to explain away Christianity may find themselves in as untenable a position as those who arrived at a similar conclusion merely through the study of the migration of symbols from East to West.

Exponents of the "Perennial Philosophy" who favor the East as the home of the ultimate truth, equate one set of values with the other in a relativistic manner. This is impossible once certain basic facts of the Indian philosophies are known.

The method usually employed in attempts to demonstrate the unoriginality of Jesus and his teachings has been to cite the seeming similarities existing between him and the founders of earlier oriental religions.

We shall have recourse to another technique, that of an analysis of the fundamental divergences between Jesus' and Buddha's teachings, and between Christ and Krishna.

The following comparisons are not intended as a criticism of the other religions. They are an attempt to demonstrate that, in spite of some common symbols, at least fundamentally the three religions offer a different approach to the perennial problem of being and becoming, and of man's relationship with the cosmos. The method employed will be a careful comparison of the canonical writings of Buddhism, the New Testament, and the doctrines of Krishna as contained in the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Puranas.

We do not assume the right to interpret esoterically either Christianity, Buddhism, or the life of Krishna. There are no set rules for esoteric interpretations, each teacher,

school or sect claiming its own interpretation as true. In this task, close contact with the tradition as it has come down to us in the canonical books of the respective religions is essential, as such books are our only authority. Only accepted and verified translations of these books are used in the following tables of comparison. An introduction to both Eastern religions, in addition to the tables, is necessary to establish when and how similarities, if any, arose in Buddhism and Krishnaism. The tables of comparison, on their own merit, should reveal whether or not a different origin and significance must be proposed for the three religions, and whether or not the fundamentals of Christianity have anything in common with these two Eastern religions.

If for a moment we exclude Buddha and Krishna from consideration, there still remains a sizable list of heroes and philosophers who have been cited at one time or another to demonstrate that Jesus is wholly or in part derivative. This list includes among others Orpheus, Hermes, Attis, Serapis, Adonis, Bacchus, Marsyas, Seneca, Epictetus, Cyrus, Marcus Aurelius, Apollon of Tyana, Alexander the Great, Mithra, Socrates, Haman, and Saturn.

We are not competent either to refute or to affirm these multitudinous comparisons. In the last analysis, however, it seems unlikely that a single person, Jesus, could have been derived from the extremely bizarre variety of figures cited above. Some are mythological, some historical, some pre-Christian. Some came after the death of Jesus, such

as the Roman emperors who were called *divus* and who were accorded divine worship by the people.

In comparing Jesus with Buddha and Krishna, we face a more complex problem. Buddhism and Krishnaism (devotion to Krishna as an incarnation of the deity Vishnu) encompass a far greater number of adherents than all the forms of Christianity. When the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Buddhist sutras, and the Mahabharata, with the Bhagavad-Gita, were translated and made available to the West, they influenced many authors and philosophers whose writings in turn reached untold numbers of Westerners. This recent penetration of Eastern thought into the West can neither be denied nor underestimated.

There are two general attitudes among writers who deal with this problem of comparison. One may be exemplified by the Buddhist apologist, George Grimm.[1] In his comparison of Buddha with Christ, he attempts to prove that the Gospels are entirely unhistorical, and dates them between the second and third centuries A.D. He believes that there were many later interpolations and Hellenistic influences. According to Grimm, Jesus taught only the truths contained in the Old Testament. He believes, therefore, that the differences in Jesus' teachings as expressed in the New Testament must be explained as later inventions. On the other hand, Grimm does not bother to establish the historical basis for the Buddhist citations which he uses as proof. He simply accepts Buddha's sayings as entirely historical and philosophically correct, while he

[1] *Buddha und Christus* (Leipzig, 1928).

disproves Christianity on the grounds that the Gospels are not based upon the sayings of the historical Jesus.

Charles F. Aiken, the Catholic apologist, on the other hand, takes the Gospels entirely for granted, accepts every incident as historical, and attempts to prove that Buddha is a fiction.

> For our chief knowledge of the legendary lore that encircles the person of Buddha, we are thrown upon Buddhist books whose integrity has to a large extent to be taken on faith, and not one of which can be proved to be as old as the synoptic Gospels.[2]

There are no original writings by either Jesus or Buddha, and for their sayings, we must rely upon later traditions and books. Therefore, one cannot accept one religion on faith and at the same time disprove the other on historical grounds. George Grimm attempts to demonstrate that faith did not enter into the original Buddhist teachings, which is correct, yet he accepts on faith that Buddha made the very pronouncements his proofs require. Each writer obviously prefers his own religion to that of the other.

Paul Carus[3] may exemplify those who stand halfway in their acceptance of both Buddhism and Christianity and who discover parallels between Buddha and Christ. But his vague parallels between the teachings of Christ and Buddha are neither striking nor convincing. Most of his Buddhist sources are Mahayana scriptures in Sanskrit com-

[2] *The Dhamma of Gotama the Buddha and the Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (Boston, 1900), p. 161f.
[3] *The Gospel of Buddha* (Chicago, 1937).

posed after the Gospels were written, Tibetan translations (although Buddhism reached Tibet only after the seventh century A.D.), and later legends of the Northern Buddhist Pantheon. Dr. Carus is inaccurate and his parallels are superficial, as the following few examples will prove.

Carus attempts to show a relationship between Christ and his Heavenly Father on the one hand, and between Siddhartha (personal name of Gautama the Buddha) and *his* father on the other hand.

> The prince having begotten a son, will love him as I love the prince. This will be a strong tie to bind Siddhattha's heart to the interests of the world, and the Kingdom of the Sakyas will remain under the sceptre of my descendents.[4]

Carus' Christian parallel to this is (p. 260):

> And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. . . . And lo a voice from heaven, saying this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

In the above Buddhist quotation from a Chinese manuscript, the Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King of the fifth century

[4] Page 14, Note the spelling. The reader will encounter various renderings of Buddha and Buddhist terminology. The original terminology of Buddhism was in Pali, one of the middle-Indian Prakrit dialects, but the later Sanskrit forms are better known:

PALI	*SANSKRIT*
Siddhattha	Siddhartha
Nibbana	Nirvana
Bodhisatta	Bodhisattva
Dhamma	Dharma
Sutta	Sutra
Bhikkhu	Bhikshu

A.D., the selfish father of Buddha speaks. He is happy that Siddhartha begot a son, Rahula (the fetter, or tie), who will keep him bound to the court, luxury, and the dynasty. The king wanted to prevent Siddhartha's entering upon the path of the study of religion and worldly renunciation. How can such an attitude be compared to that of the Father: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Scholars like Carus (pp. 41f, 261) compare the Four Noble Truths, the existence, source, cause and cessation of suffering, with the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-11). In Buddhism, the "poor in spirit" cannot inherit the "kingdom of heaven" which, according to Buddha's doctrine, does not exist. According to Buddha, the meek cannot inherit the earth, since it is an illusion and the greatest of all fetters. The "pure in heart" will not "see God," since in Buddhism there is no God. Instead, there is the ultimate goal, Nirvana, complete personal extinction and cessation. "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven," has little meaning to Buddha, for there is neither gladness, reward (in the Christian sense), nor a heaven.

To discover analogies in the legendary lore of Buddhism and Christianity is another prevalent practice among scholars like A. K. Coomaraswamy, Joseph Campbell, Father Henry de Lubac, Heinrich Zimmer, and others. The effusions of mystics and commentators, while interesting in themselves, are secondary to the great fundamental

tenets as contained in the canonical scriptures of both religions. When elements from folklore, symbolic traditions, and psychoanalytic interpretations are grafted on legendary material, the argument becomes pointless, for the most unlikely sources are brought to bear in these comparisons.

In a recent book, Father Henry de Lubac works out an analogy between the Cross of Christ, the Tree of Buddha, and the ancient Pillar symbol. To support his theory, he cites the Rig-Veda and the Atharva-Veda, the Hindu compendium of sorcery and witchcraft:

> Again, the god of fire, Agni, is conceived in the *Rig-Veda* as the Pillar that supports men and gods and rules and protects the firmament; the axial tree of the Chariot of the Sun that separates and at the same time unites heaven and earth. The *Atharva-Veda* sings the praises of this Pillar "in which every existence is fixed":
> Borne by it, heaven and earth stand firm. On it rests everything that has a soul, everything that breathes and sleeps. . . . Ancient is its name, vast its idea. This whole universe is founded upon it, on it rests whatever moves and breathes . . . the great mystery at the centre of the world, to it all its vassals bring their tribute . . . whoever could know this Thread upon which all creatures are woven, would know the great Exegesis. . . .
> This unique Tree, this Pillar, this "Column of Gold," this Axis of the world, is the stake of sacrifice which carries to the gods the offerings made by men and in this way ensures the regular progress of the universe (even before the sacrifice is itself raised to the rank of supreme divinity). . . . It is erected on the holy ground to the singing of: "Rise, O Lord of the forest, to the summit of the earth." The name 'Lord of the forest' emphasises its vegetable character, but it is also identified with Prajapati, the mythical ancestor of the world and humanity—

or rather the divine substance, in human form, of which they are made. For the three worlds which compose the entire universe, the spiritual, the heavenly and the earthly (svar, bhumas, bhin), are the three elements that constitute the very body of Prajapati. Hence here again Buddhism appears as the heir to a tradition: if the body of the Buddha sums up in its three parts the whole universe, it is in this no more than a replica of the body of Prajapati as conceived in Brahman mythology.[5]

Father de Lubac concedes that his material is based upon both pre-Buddhist and pre-Christian mythologies, and therefore it must be rejected by us as having no direct bearing upon the problem of essential similarities or dissimilarities between the two religions. But he continues:

Here, then, we have two manifestations, two utilisations of an ancient universal myth by two great historical religions. In this particular case neither the Buddhist nor the Christian imagination had anything to invent: both found ready to hand, combined in one way or another, all the elements from which they were to draw their own particular symbol. Must one therefore believe that these two great religions did no more than gather the old mythological speculations to their bosoms and give them new life? To this conclusion at least tend the observations of A. K. Coomaraswamy. (p. 71)

Joseph Campbell, representing, with Heinrich Zimmer, René Guénon, and others, a more modern school of symbolic interpretation, is unconcerned about the historical foundation of his material. He writes:

We do not particularly care whether Rip Van Winkle, Kamar al-Zaman, or Jesus Christ ever actually lived. Their *stories* are

[5] Aspects of Buddhism (New York, 1954), p. 66.

> what concerns us: and these stories are so widely distributed over the world—attached to various heroes in various lands—that the question of whether this or that local carrier of the universal theme may or may not have been a historical, living man can be of only secondary moment. The stressing of this historical element will lead to confusion; it will simply obfuscate the picture message.[6]

His disregard of the "historical element" does indeed permit him to link medieval legends of Shiva and Buddha to the earlier Gospel story of Christ; shakti to the power of God; and Rip Van Winkle to Jesus.

> To bring images back to life, one has to seek, not interesting applications to modern affairs, but illuminating hints from the inspired past. When these are found, vast areas of half-dead iconography disclose again their permanently human meaning. (p. 249)

The theory of the "universal myth" has led many writers to disregard essentials in favor of analogies, and to take similarities from the most disconnected traditions, times, and places, as identical.

There is a great deal of sympathy for the magnificent philosophy of Buddha among Western students, but the seeming parallels which are supposed to demonstrate the affinity between Christianity and Buddhism are based more upon enthusiasm than upon a careful comparison and understanding of the canonical scriptures. The legendary lore which grew up around Buddha is not valid for the purpose of comparison, since it developed in the northern

[6] *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York, 1949), pp. 230, 231.

Buddhist schools which attained great influence long after the death of Christ. The great fundamentals with which we shall deal in comparison are faith, love, miracles, the question of divinity, forgiveness of sins, judgment, and resurrection.

10

Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism

As in Christianity, there are two great denominations in Buddhism. They are the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) and Hinayana (Smaller Vehicle). "Hinayana" was coined by the *later* Mahayana school and certainly not with good intentions. Hinayana is the original teachings of the Buddha, and it is still preserved today in Ceylon, Burma, and certain parts of southern India. Its adherents prefer it to be known by the name of "Theravada," or "the Teaching of the Elders." [1] We shall employ the more familiar term Hinayana without the implication of "lesser."

After the death of Gautama Buddha (the Enlightened One), his doctrine, which was a purely ethical system and not primarily a religious one, was handed down in a carefully observed oral tradition. The severe ethics and self-discipline taught by Buddha in order to "gain liberation from the wheel of life and rebirth" were quickly enveloped by magic-ritualistic elements and compromise which enabled greater numbers to believe in easier ways of attaining

[1] He in whom there are truth, virtue, pity, restraint, moderation, he who is free from impurity and is wise, he is called an elder.—*Dhammapada XIX, Sacred Books of the East* (New York, 1917), X, 339. The *Dhammapada,* or Footsteps of the Law, is the oldest and the most popular of the canonical Buddhist scriptures.

Nirvana. Approximately two centuries after the death of the Buddha, Emperor Asoka, the Constantine of Buddhism, was converted. He called together a number of councils to define the teachings of Buddha and to preserve them from any impurities and additions. The Buddhist sutras as fixed by Emperor Asoka during the third century B.C. are considered canonical. Only centuries after these councils did there develop around Buddhism a tremendous body of additional rules, prayers, legends, rituals, and metaphysics, which were undreamed of in Buddha's time. Slowly various groups emerged that taught easier ways to attain Nirvana, and compromise after compromise with the original teaching was introduced. The various dissenting groups banded together and expanded rapidly. Finally, at the council at Jalandhara, about A.D. 100, under King Kanishka, the schism, long in the offing, materialized. From this split emerged the two main denominations of Buddhism. This paramount schism in Buddhism is usually ignored by those who affirm the equivalence of Buddhism and Christianity.

Aside from the fundamental differences between the two religions and their founders, which are specifically enumerated later in a table, we will point out too that most of the details of Buddha's life are mythical rather than historical. The deification of Siddhartha has progressed into legend only in the Mahayana school. Buddha's original teaching was not a religion. It was a system of self-discipline and self-deliverance. He offered a "way" of overcoming the fetters of life and a reformation that was

both social and spiritual. Even though he was of a noble family of the warrior caste, he did not condone the caste system, the scourge of India. The lower castes lived in spiritual and social bondage to those above them and particularly to the Brahmin priesthood. The most these degraded ones could hope for was to be reborn theoretically into the next higher caste, and thus step by step, to reach the highest caste, the Brahmins. Buddha addressed himself to all, to the lowest outcastes as well as to the aristocrats, in a message that offered hope to everyone and leveled the castes by "overcoming hatred by love." His was no divine revelation, but rather a path discovered by his own efforts.

The essence of his teachings consisted of the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Sublime Eightfold Path."

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. Life implies pain.
2. Pain has a source.
3. That source can be stayed.
4. The means (of staying it) are available.[2]

In Buddhism, pain, suffering, and life are identical. To be born is to suffer, to grow old is to suffer, to lose what is loved is to suffer, to be tied to what is not loved is to suffer, to endure what is distasteful is to suffer.

The Sublime Eightfold Path which leads to the riddance of suffering is:

1. Right views
2. Right aspirations
3. Right speech
4. Right conduct

[2] Subhadra Bhikshu, *A Buddhist Catechism,* compiled from the Sacred Writings of the Southern Buddhists (New York, 1920), pp. 38-40.

5. Right living
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right meditation

Buddha's "Middle Path," which avoids the extremes of sensuality and asceticism, leads to Nirvana. Nirvana is not hope for another world, although it presupposes the doctrine of karma and rebirth, but is simply the cessation of every vanity, every desire, every passion, every feeling of ill will or sorrow.

This purely philosophic and ethical teaching of the rejection of life did not gain a permanent hold in India. For a few centuries it existed side by side with Brahmanism. Gradually, the more sensuous and emotional character of Hindu popular worship lured the people away from the philosophical teachings of Buddhism. The Brahmin priests regained their supremacy and enforced the caste system again to its limits.[3]

Buddhism, in the modified form of Mahayana, spread to China, Tibet, and Japan. The Hinayana school, which survived in South India, did not deify the Buddha, but was content to revere him as a great teacher who had discovered a great truth. The Mahayana school, or Northern Buddhism, surrounded the Buddha with legends of supernatural birth and a thousand other fables and fantasies. It was not satisfied with a mere teacher, but demanded the magical and the miraculous. While Hinayana preserved

[3] "I do not call a man a Brahmin because of his origin or of his mother. He is indeed arrogant, and he is wealthy; but the poor, who is free from all attachments, him I call indeed a Brahmin."—The *Dhammapada* XXVI.

most closely the original teachings as established by Asoka, Mahayana transformed them into a complex of ritual, superstition, and emotion. Hinayana shuns magic; it teaches the individual path, that is, individual effort and individual perfection leading to Arhatship and Nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is taught that the mere repetition of Buddha's name will lead to salvation. The major effort of the so-called "Pure Land" school of Japanese Buddhism consists of endlessly repeating Buddha's name (Nembutsu) in order to be reborn into the celestial country of Amidha. It relegates every moral rule and requirement into the background.[4]

The eminent Mahayana scholar D. T. Suzuki explains the polytheism of Mahayana Buddhism as a compromise with those less learned and less endowed spiritually and mentally:

> The Mahayana idea of "skillful means" (*upaya* in Sanskrit), according to which supreme Buddhahood incarnates itself in a variety of forms in order to save all beings from ignorance and misery, has produced a number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and even "supernatural beings" in the Buddhist scheme of cosmology. This is the reason why the Mahayana is sometimes regarded as polytheistic. The Mahayanist reasoning, however, is that salvation is to be achieved in conformity with the men-

[4] "If there be any one who commits many evil deeds, provided that he does not speak evil of the Mahavaipulya Sutras, he, though himself a very stupid man, and neither ashamed nor sorry for all the evil actions that he has done, yet, while dying, may meet a good and learned teacher who will recite and laud the headings and titles of the . . . Mahayana scriptures. Having thus heard the names of all the Sutras, he will be freed from the greatest sins which would involve him in births and deaths during a thousand kalpas."—*Meditation on Buddha Amitayus, The Sacred Books of the East,* XLIX, 195.

tality of beings, that is, with their intellectual capacity to grasp the truth. What a child wants is a mechanical toy and not the real engine, which demands a great deal of technical knowledge to handle. As long as our mental and spiritual endowments are severally graded—in fact, subject to infinite gradation—the doctrine of "skillful means" which distinguishes the Mahayana from the Hinayana must be said to be in agreement with the facts of human experience. For this reason we see many varieties of Buddhist figures enshrined in the Mahayana temples of the Far East. They are really different virtues and powers of the one Buddha.

In a word, the Mahayanists are more broadminded and liberal-spirited than their elder brothers, Hinayanists, not only in their practical ways of living, but also in their philosophy and conception of the world generally. In this, however, they are sometimes apt to go too far as they allow too much latitude to their understanding of the teaching of the Buddha. Their latitudinarianism thus occasionally proves too antinomian.[5]

By antinomian, Dr. Suzuki means that the believers are freed from moral laws and self-discipline by the dispensation of grace.

This new principle is in direct opposition to the original teachings of Buddha, as summed up and condemned by the third of the Ten Fetters:

> The superstition that salvation can be gained by outward religious practices, rites, prayers, sacrifies, worship of relics, pilgrimages, and various other forms and ceremonies.[6]

The statement by Dr. Suzuki illustrates the great distance that Mahayana Buddhism has traveled from the doctrine of the Buddha.

[5] D. T. Suzuki, *Japanese Buddhism* (Tokyo, 1938), pp. 17f.
[6] Subhadra Bhikshu, *A Buddhist Catechism* (New York, 1920), p. 57.

The mystical writings of Mahayana saints are often profound, but they have little or no basis in the teachings of Gautama Buddha. He never spoke of the soul (atman) as a separate entity which would continue to live after death, nor did he believe in a heaven, higher evolutions, and angelic hosts. Mahayana speaks of the soul, of an afterlife, angels, thirteen heavens, intercessors, ghosts, and miracles supposedly performed by Buddha. It also introduced image worship, a concept and practice entirely foreign and even contradictory to the original teachings. Mahayana introduced saints in the form of Bodhisattvas and developed the concept of the Amitabha Buddha, or the "Buddha of Infinite Light," linking the Buddha to solar worship.

The celestial Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are thought of as living in erotic bliss with their wives. This idea introduced the female principle into what was originally an austere philosophical and ethical system completely devoid of sexual allusions. The title Lokanatha, or, "Lord of the World," given to Gautama Buddha denotes an elaboration typical of Mahayana, and is characteristic of its appeal to the emotions of the masses rather than to their reason and philosophical capabilities.

11

Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity

The discussion so far has served as a preliminary to a more thorough treatment of the similarities and dissimilarities between Christianity and Buddhism. As we have noted, there are two schools of Buddhism, as there are two main schools of Christianity. It is true that the Christian church never was an undivided church, and practically every century since its beginning has witnessed its quota of schisms. In order to arrive at a fair comparison we shall contrast the two greatest proponents of Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism, with the two greatest proponents of Buddhism, Hinayana and Mahayana. Chronologically, Protestantism and Mahayana follow, respectively, Catholicism and Hinayana. But Protestantism and Hinayana are more closely allied in spirit and practice, as Catholicism with Mahayana. Protestantism is spiritually related to the Apostolic Church. It has attempted to return to the purity of the primitive church, to a time when symbols, images, cathedrals, organized priesthood, colorful vestures, and the like were as yet unknown or unpracticed.[1]

[1] Catholicism and Mahayana Buddhism represent the "dynamic" aspects of the two religions. As we read in the 1947 Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII:
"As circumstances and the needs of Christians warrant, public worship

Catholicism and Mahayana emphasize the ritualistic, mystical elements in worship, while Hinayana and Protestantism base themselves on the original, canonical scriptures and are more direct in their approach. Hinayana rejects much the same elements which Protestantism rejects, and for similar reasons. Buddha despised magical practices. "In the *Dighanikaya*, Buddha is represented as saying, 'It is because I see danger in the practice of these mystic wonders that I loathe and abhor and am ashamed thereof.'"[2] He condemned the esoteric sciences, which he considered *tiracchana*, or crooked.[3] It is unnecessary to point out that the critics of Protestantism have always belittled its lack of emotional-mystical elements, its sober and puritanical character, and its lack of "warmth." Mahayana, like Catholicism, has its saints. Catholicism introduced female worship (Theotokos doctrine) into Christianity at the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century A.D., while Mahayana introduced female worship, "Shakti worship" or Tantrism, into Buddhism about the same time, some ten centuries after Buddha's death. Both Hinayana and Protestantism reject the worship of mother goddesses.[4] As the

is organized, developed and enriched by new rites, ceremonies and regulations . . ." (par. 22)
"Just as obviously unwise and mistaken is the zeal of one who in matters liturgical would go back to the rites and usage of antiquity, discarding the new patterns introduced by disposition of divine Providence to meet the change of circumstances and situation." (par. 63)

[2] Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* (Oxford, 1932), p. 18, footnote 1.

[3] Bhattacharyya, *loc. cit.*, p. 18.

[4] "Thus for example, as Catholic doctrine on the Incarnate Word of God, the eucharistic sacrament and sacrifice and Mary the Virgin

distinguished Indian scholar Benoytosh Bhattacharyya says:

> It would be reasonably expected that the sublime Mahayana philosophy would lead the people to happiness, prosperity and salvation; but, instead, it led them to evil and culminated in Tantrism, which may justly be called a full-fledged esoteric system.[5]

Tantrism, a combination of primitive magic and female worship, was the greatest digression from canonical Buddhism. Other tenets of Mahayana, while representing compromise and change, were not as violent a departure as this. In Tantrism, Nirvana becomes not a "dying out" (though Buddha never defined it further), but a condition, "Sunya." "They formulated that Sunya is Niratma, and a goddess in whose eternal embrace the individual mind, i.e., the Bodhicitta, or Vijnana, is locked, and there remains in eternal bliss and happiness." [6] This philosophy arose about the third century A.D., and attained the greatest popularity in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries of our era. It lives on in northern China, and Tibet. Though it was at first esoteric, it eventually became general practice, and led to licentiousness and depravity. The Tantrics say:

> That one who strives after salvation should always enjoy Prajnaparamita, or the perfect truth. This Prajna, they said,

Mother of God came to be determined with greater certitude and clarity, new ritual forms were introduced through which the acts of the liturgy proceeded to reproduce this brighter light issuing from the decrees of the teaching authority of the Church . . ."—Encyclical *Mediator Dei,* par. 52.

[5] Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.,* p. 22.
[6] Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.,* p. 27.

> resides in every woman on earth, and they should be enjoyed without reservation. Good, bad, indifferent, diseased and depraved, all are welcome to him. No distinction should be made between women of higher castes or lower castes, and no women, even those closely related, should be allowed to escape.[7]

Under the impact of the new licentiousness of Tantrism, the historical Buddha and his teachings faded into complete obscurity. The five (divine) Dhyani Buddhas were formulated as presiding over the five elements. Each had his Shakti, or female consort, and each pair was represented as in eternal conjugal embrace, in the Yab-Yum position. In this position, the Shakti sits *in coito* on the lap of the Buddha, facing him, with her legs encircling his waist. These Dhyani Buddhas are eternal Buddhas who do not incarnate. They, together with their Shaktis, bring forth various Bodhisattvas who oversee creation. (Plate I)

Dr. Bhattacharyya remarks that the name of Amitabha appears for the first time in the *Sukhavativyuha*, when it was translated into Chinese between A.D. 148 and 170. He indicates the gradual augmentation of the Buddhist Pantheon by the names that appear in it. During the fourth and fifth centuries, two new gods appeared, namely Aksobhya as a Tathagata, and Manjusri as a Bodhisattya. Fa-hien (A.D. 394-414) mentions the name of Avalokitesvara and the future Buddha Maitreya. Hiuen-thsang (A.D. 629-645) mentions ten gods and the names of deified saints. The Pantheon increases greatly under Tantric influence. I-Tsing (A.D. 671-695) mentions several new

[7] Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

ICONS OF MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

(top left) Hellenistic Bodhisattva, haloed, holding lotus flowers and vase. (top right) Jambhala, in Yab-Yum with his Shakti.

(bottom left) Buddhakapala, in Yab-Yum with Citrasena. ". . . the supreme destroyer . . . is embraced in the left by the Prajna, Citrasena by name, intoxicated, nude, and fearless, who with dishevelled hair kisses the god incessantly . . ."—B. Battacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* (Oxford, 1924), p. 64. (bottom right) Manjunatha Lokesvara. One of the 108 incarnations of Avalokitesvara, the god of wisdom. He holds the rosary in his right hand and the book against the breast with his left.

names of gods, and Santideva (A.D. 695-730) augments the list. The conception of the highest primordial monotheistic Buddha arose in the Nalanda monastery only during the tenth century of our era. Even the Dhyani Buddhas are supposed to owe their origin to him. This Adi-Buddha is also represented occasionally in Yab-Yum.

The earliest literature which prescribes the forms of the gods and the procedures for worshiping them was written, probably, by Asanga, who flourished about three centuries after Christ. The inception of Tantrism thus coincides with the waning of the primitive Christian church. The Gospels had already been widely diffused, and commentaries had been written. In contrast to the ever-increasing pantheon of Mahayana Buddhism with its numerous legends and icons, the Synod of Elvira, during the fourth century, prohibited any figurative representation of Christian subject matter.[8] It would indeed be difficult to find any influences affecting the Gospels, or the funda-

[8] "There should be no pictures in the church building, lest what is worshipped and adored might be painted on the walls."—Canon 36, from Walter Lowrie, *Art in the Early Church* (New York, 1947), p. 29.

". . . All divine essence, which neither at any time began to be nor at any time will come to an end of life, is without features of body and possesses nothing like the forms by which the eternal delimitation of members usually defines and bounds the body's frame. For whatever is like this, we think is mortal and subject to perishing, and we do not believe anything can attain to life eternal which an unavoidable end hems in, however remote the terms of its existence. But as for you, you are not satisfied to enfold the gods in the measured limits of forms . . . you even confine them to human shape, and what is far more degrading, you restrain them to the configuration of earthly bodies."—Arnobius of Sicca, fourth century, *The Case Against the Pagans,* translated by George E. McCracken (Maryland, 1949), p. 201.

mental concepts of primitive Christianity, from that quarter.

With the rise of Tantrism (called by the Hindus the "left-hand path"), Mahayana Buddhism prescribed the use of images and symbols just as Latin Christianity did in the Second Council of Nice (A.D. 787) and the Council of Trent (A.D. 1545-1563). Buddha was a reformer. He "challenged everything set up by the orthodox community: their caste system, their Vedas, their sacrifices and their philosophical speculations. . . . Buddha was the product of a great upheaval . . . he was a great repudiator of Brahmanic orthodoxy." [9]

Luther and Calvin too were products of a great upheaval. The rise of Buddhism resulted in a great social and spiritual stimulus, as the Reformation had similar effects in norther Europe. Martin Luther was excommunicated by the old church; Buddha was attacked by the Brahmins for rejecting the "divine institutions" of caste, their subtleties and metaphysical speculations. Luther preached in the vernacular, and made the Bible accessible to the people by translating it into their native tongue. Buddha too preferred the Pali dialects, the languages of the humble, in order to reach the people who were ignorant of Sanskrit, the language of the sacred Hindu poems.

Hinayana Buddhism was a reformation of Hinduism; Protestantism a reformation of Catholicism. Buddha was a great teacher to the Hinayana school, as Luther was a great leader and teacher to the Protestants. Neither was a

[9] Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 16.

saint or a god. Mahayana depends upon the appeal of sacred art and relics.[10] Needless to say, both Protestantism and Hinayana reject sacred art.[11]

> Just as little as Early Buddhism dreamed of an expression of its characteristic ideas through poetry, drama, or music, so little was it imagined that the arts of sculpture and painting could be anything but worldly in their purpose and effect. The arts were looked upon as physical luxuries, and loveliness as a snare. "Beauty is nothing to me," says the *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*, "neither the beauty of body, nor that that comes of dress." The Brethren were forbidden to allow the figures of men and women to be painted on monastery walls, and were permitted only representations of wreath and creepers.[12]

[10] Except for the ascetic Zen sect of Japan which, in its more spiritual aspects, opposes "sacred art," as the following amusing story of a Zen master will illustrate. "One winter night Tan-hsia took shelter in a temple, and finding that the fire was going out he took down one of the wooden figures of the Buddha from the altar and placed it on the embers. When the keeper of the temple discovered what had been done he was furious at such an act of sacrilege and began to scold Tan-hsia for his irreverence. But Tan-hsia merely scratched about among the ashes, remarking: 'I am gathering the holy relics from the burnt ashes.' 'How,' asked the keeper, 'can you get holy relics from a wooden Buddha? 'If there are no holy relics,' replied Tan-hsia, 'this certainly is not a Buddha and I am committing no sacrilege. May I have the two remaining Buddhas for my fire?' "—A. W. Watts, *The Spirit of Zen* (London, 1936), pp. 49f.

[11] Sacred art, that is, in the sense of canonical and prescribed icons and symbols. "In Byzantine church architecture a fixed rule developed by which all walls and vaults were ornamented with pictorial representations that had an underlying secret symbolism." — Wilhelm Schamoni, *The Face of the Saints* (New York, 1947), p. 27. Luther wrote "Pictures, bells, eucharistic vestments, and the like I hold to be free. . . . We concede that they may be used freely, provided pomp and luxury be absent; for you please not God the more by blessing in vestments, nor the less by doing without them."—*Lutheran Cyclopedia* (New York, 1899), p. 24. See also Peter Fingesten, "Toward a New Definition of Religious Art," *College Art Journal*, X, No. 2, pp. 131-146.

[12] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Siva* (New York, 1924), p. 46.

Comparisons such as these may be carried to great lengths and detail. The Buddhist philosophy, while already diluted before the advent of Christ, did not develop its complex Pantheon until about the second and third centuries A.D., which therefore could not have influenced the Gospels' interpretation of the life of Christ.

The following table of comparison will show, however, that the Hinayana conception of Buddha and the Protestant conception of Jesus are basically incompatible. Both stand as close as possible to the law as enunciated by their respective founders. The only valid comparison seems to exist between the reformer Gautama Buddha and the reformer Martin Luther. Both fought established religions overwrought with extraneous elements. Neither man prophesied. Both lived normal lives, marrying and begetting children. Both died natural deaths, and neither pretended to be the chosen mouthpiece of God.

Mahayana is more properly described as a religion, while Hinayana may be characterized as a philosophical system which approaches the problem of existence by "right knowledge" and by "destroying ignorance." The legends of Buddha's miracles, astonishing feats, and wisdom during childhood, which usually provide the basis for the comparisons to Christianity, are to be found in the various books of the Mahayana school.[13] The Jatakas, or birth

[13] The Buddhist principles of maitri (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion) have often been compared to Christian love and compassion. The Christian virtues are "active" for the sake of another, while the Buddhist ones are "negative" and for the sake of the self. The Mahayana doctrine which teaches karuna negates this virtue with its

stories, even though canonical, are beast fables recounting Buddha's former incarnations. They are traditional Hindu folklore which have no connection with Buddhist philosophy proper. Similar stories are to be found in the folklore of other nations. "They probably belong, like the other beast-fables, to the very early childhood of the Aryan race." [14]

In order then to counteract the false romanticizing as well as popular parallels of the supposed dependence of Christianity upon Buddhism, we have prepared a table of comparison in which the great fundamentals of both religions are juxtaposed. All the following Buddhist citations are taken from Pali texts, while the Christian references are from the King James version of the Bible.[15]

ultimate metaphysical doctrine shunyata, or the void, denying reality to any human emotion or practice whatsoever.

> "Penetrate into the ultimate truth of mind,
> And we have neither things nor no-things;
> Enlightened and not-enlightened—they are the same;
> Neither mind nor thing there is."

—D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (New York, 1949), p. 170.

[14] *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, X, p. 293. "To adapt such an ancient tale was in general a simple matter, as it was not necessary to make the actors Buddhists. The tale might be told of a past time when there was no Buddha in existence, and in which the ideas are those of ordinary Hinduism. The one feature necessary for the story is that the Bodhisatta in some character should appear. When the tale itself contained no instance of a wise person who could play the part of the Bodhisatta, modification was necessary; though this is often done by making the Bodhisatta a divinity or a sage who witnesses the events and recites the *gathas*, the verses with which the tale concludes. Some of the stories of the past are evidently manufactured by adapting the circumstances in the story of the present, and building up a story of the past of it."—E. J. Thomas, *Jataka Tales* (Cambridge, 1916), p. 3.

[15] The same conclusions will be arrived at, of course, by using the Douay version of the New Testament.

12

Table of Comparison

BUDDHISM	CHRISTIANITY
1. *Buddha is neither a prophet nor a messiah. He was no supernatural being sent by God. He was a man, though considered morally and spiritually more advanced than his contemporaries* (Subhadra Bhikshu, *A Buddhist Catechism* (New York, 1920), questions 9 and 10, p. 11). "You yourself must make an effort, the Tathagatas (Buddhas) are only preachers" (Dhammapada XX, trans. by Max Müller, *Sacred Books & Early Literature of the East* (New York, 1917), X, 340).	1. *Jesus is a prophet, the Messiah.* "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*" (John 4:25-6). ". . . Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19). "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23).
2. *Siddhartha was born in a palace, son of a rich provincial ruler.*	2. *Jesus was born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter.*
3. *Siddhartha married Yasodhara and begot a son, Rahula.*	3. *Jesus never married.*
4. *Buddha taught his doctrine for about forty-five years.*	4. *Jesus taught the doctrine for about one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half years.*

5. Buddha did not ask for faith in himself, nor in his doctrines. To be a Buddhist, one does not require faith. Understanding of the Four Noble Truths and right action are the paths to liberation.

"It is not through mere faith in this doctrine that Alara Kalama announces that he has learnt it for himself, realized it, and lives in the possession of it. Alara Kalama surely knows and perceives this doctrine" (H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translation* (Cambridge, 1947), p. 335.)

"The man who is free from credulity, but knows the uncreated, and who has cut all ties, removed all temptations, renounced all desires, he is the greatest of men" (Dhammapada, VII).

5. Faith is a major tenet of Christianity.

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mark 10:52).

"But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him;* for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

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6. According to Buddha, to be born is a tragedy, and would retard the state of Nirvana.

It is one of the cornerstones of the Buddhistic Doctrine, which teaches liberation from the wheel of rebirth. Those who become Arhats (Liberated Masters) are not reborn in physical life. Every follower of Buddha seeks liberation from the fetter of life and death.

"On birth depend old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, mis-

6. Christianity teaches the necessity of being born; does not despise life.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Eph. 5:29).

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord" (Luke 2:23).

ery, grief, and despair. Thus does this entire aggregation of misery arise" (Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 204).

". . . Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you" (I Cor. 6:19).

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7. *Buddha was scientific, philosophical and psychological in his approach to the problems of reality. He accepted only those phenomena which can be verified by reason. He refused to talk about the afterlife of the soul.*

"The religious life, Malunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the soul and the body are identical. . . . The religious life, Malunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the saint exists after death. ...Accordingly, Malunkyaputta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not elucidated, and what it is that I have elucidated. And, what Malunkyaputta, have I not elucidated? I have not elucidated, Malunkyaputta, that the world is eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is not eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is finite; I have not elucidated that the world is infinite; I have not elucidated that the soul and the body are identical; I have not elucidated that the soul is one thing and the body another; I have not elucidated that the saint exists after death; I have not elucidated that the saint does not

7. *Jesus was mystical and intuitive in his approach.*

"But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things" (Mark 13:23).

". . . Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs . . ." (Acts 2:22).

exist after death; I have not elucidated that the saint both exists and does not exist after death; I have not elucidated that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why, Malunkyaputta, have I not elucidated this? Because, Malunkyaputta, this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, the supernatural faculties, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore I have not elucidated it" (Warren, *op. cit.*, pp. 121f.).

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8. *Buddha considered miracles a violation of the laws of nature.*
"A real miracle would be arbitrary violation of the universal laws of Nature. Buddhism teaches that all things in heaven and earth are subject to natural laws. This reign of law, having for its basis the moral order of the universe (Karma), binds even the highest gods" (Bhikshu, *op. cit.*, p. 61).

8. *Jesus performed several miracles as did the apostles.*
"And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased" (John 6:2).

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9. *Buddha taught liberation from the law of cause and effect, or "ethical retribution," through knowledge, Samadhi (highest discipline of meditation), and individual effort or merit.*
"Rouse thyself by thyself, examine thyself by thyself, thus self-protected and attentive wilt

9. *Jesus taught salvation by means of faith and belief; the principle of grace and forgiveness of sins.*
"She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:27).

thou live happily . . ." (Dhammapada XXV).
"I have conquered all, I know all, in all conditions of life I am free from taint; I have left all, and through all the destruction of thirst I am free; having learnt myself, whom should I indicate as my teacher?" (Dhammapada, XXIV).

". . . Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36).
"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7).

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10. *Buddha proclaimed the self alone is the lord.*
"Self is the lord of self, who else could be the lord? With self well subdued, a man finds a lord such as few can find" (Dhammapada, XII).

10. *Jesus is the Lord.*
"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for *so* I am" (John 13:13).

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11. *Buddha was opposed to the traditional Brahminical law and worship.*
"Whatever a man sacrifice in this world as an offering or as an oblation for a whole year in order to gain merit, the whole of it is not worth a quarter of a farthing; reverence shown to the righteous is better" (Dhammapada, VIII).
" 'There is no such thing as a gift, a sacrifice, an offering, a fruition or result of good or evil deeds, a present life, a future life, a mother, a father, apparitional existence, or any monk or Brahman having found the right road and correct line of conduct who can proclaim of his own knowledge and perception

11. *Jesus fulfilled the law.*
"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).
"All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44).

either this world or the next!' any such heresy, heretical belief, heretical jungle, heretical wilderness, heretical puppet show, heretical writhing, heretical fetter, figment, notion, persuasion, affectation, byway, false way, falsity, schismatic doctrine, or error is called the attachment of heresy" (Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 192).

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12. *Buddha did not claim higher knowledge or contact with a divinity. His doctrine came as a result of his experiences in trying all possible teachings and disciplines of spiritual life. He experienced illumination by his own efforts.*

"And again, O bhikkhus, that I had become versed in the way which leads to the destruction of sorrow, though the noble truth concerning it was not among the doctrines handed down, there arose within me the eye, there arose the knowledge, there arose the understanding, there arose the wisdom, there arose the light" ("Sutta of The Founder of the Kingdom of Righteousness," trans. by T. W. Rhys Davids, verse 20).

12. *Jesus had higher knowledge, and had contact with God the Father.*

"This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Mark 9:7).

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

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13. *Buddha taught one truth without qualifications.*

"I have preached the truth without making any distinction be-

13. *Jesus taught in parables, and said there is a higher knowledge.*

"And he said unto them, Unto

tween exoteric and esoteric doctrine: for in respect of the truths, Ananda, the Tathagata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher, who keeps some things back" (*The Book of the Great Decease*, 11[2]:32).

you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables" (Mark 4:11). "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples" (Mark 4:34).

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14. *Buddha taught:*
"Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves" (Great Decease, 11:33).
"Work out your salvation with diligence" (Great Decease, III: 66).

14. *Jesus is the refuge.*
"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

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15. *The Buddhists do not ask as a condition for liberation blind compliance with the law.*
"Some would spread religious faith.
By strong compulsive laws . . .
Gentle lessons and persuasion
Be still Asoka's ways!
I value inward inspiration . . .
Awakening of the heart . . .
Not a formal blind compliance
With rules that we impart."
(From the Eighth Pillar Edict of Emperor Asoka (c. 240 B.C.), trans. by R. Dutt.)

15. *The law is holy and eternal.*
"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31).
"Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

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16. *Buddha's words are not considered the words of God, and the sutras are not infallible. He taught a certain freedom of choice in the rules of the orders*

16. *The Gospels are considered inspired.*
"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise

which he founded. The rules are flexible, and error is admitted.

"Everything in the holy books regarding the subject of religion, human suffering, the Karma and the way to Nirvana, is the pure unadulterated truth. But there are certain portions of the scriptures that contain various errors" (Bhikshu, *op. cit.*, p. 63).

"When I am gone Ananda, let the order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and minor precepts . . ." (Great Decease, VI:3).

pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18).

"All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16).

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17. *There is no hint in Buddha's teachings of any judgment by a superior being. No heaven, no hell, except that which the individual prepares for himself by his own deeds. There is only Karma, that law which either advances or retards the individual according to his own failures or attainments.*

"If wandering ascetics, O priests, members of another sect, were to say to you, 'Sirs, is it in order to be reborn in the world of the gods that the monk Gotama leads a holy life?' Would ye not, O priests, if that question were put to you be distressed at, ashamed of, and loathe the idea?" "Yes, Reverend Sir." "So it appears, O priests, that ye are distressed at, ashamed of, and

17. *Jesus is the Judge.*

"But I say unto you, that every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgments unto the Son" (John 5:22).

"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39).

loathe the idea of life in heaven, heavenly beauty, heavenly happiness, heavenly glory; that ye are distressed at, ashamed of, and loathe the idea of heavenly power . . ." (Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 424).

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18. *Life and love are and result in suffering. Buddha taught detachment from love.*
"Let, therefore, no man love anything; loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing and hate nothing have no fetters" (Dhammapada, XVI).

18. *Love is the highest Christian principle. The first and second commandments of Jesus deal with love toward God and toward neighbors.*
"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 19:19).
"By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).
"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (I John 4:7).
"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" (I John 4:12).

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19. *Buddha taught non-attachment of any sort, even to children and friends. Singleness, solitude, freedom from all attachments, lead to the cessation of suffering.*
"Having abandoned the practice of violence toward all objects, not doing violence to any one of them, let one wish not for children . . ."
"There are friendships to one who lives in society; this our

19. *Jesus loved children, and taught us to love them: He valued friendship highly.*
"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me" (Matt. 18:4-5).
"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

present grief arises from having friendships; observing the evils resulting from friendship, let one walk alone like a rhinoceros" (Rhinoceros Sutta, 1 and 2).

"Henceforth, I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends . . ." (John 15:13, 15).

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20. *Buddha, as a teacher of the path of individual attainment, did not advocate a congregational religion. Thus one should study and meditate in silence. Originally, there were no churches, no altars, no services for groups. He lectured to groups, but he did not believe in fellowship which disturbs meditation.*

"The attaining of even temporary Samadhi (meditation) by anyone who is attached to society is impossible . . . let one, having heard this, walk alone like a rhinoceros."

"Men associate with and serve others for the sake of an object; friends who have no object in view are difficult to obtain. . . . Men are not pure. Let one walk alone like a rhinoceros" (Rhinoceros Sutta, 20, 41).

20. *Jesus taught a congregational religion, one that worships and prays together. The spirit of fellowship was prized.*

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our friendship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3).

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

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21. *Buddha considered the body inferior to the mind. Meditation is practiced to subdue and conquer the body, then the emotions, and finally, the mind itself.*

". . . This body is a calamity, an excrescence, a danger, a dis-

21. *The body is of God.*

"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and

ease, a dart of sorrow, a fear to me; observing this danger resulting from desires, let one walk alone like a rhinoceros" (Rhinoceros Sutta, 17).

in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19, 20).
". . . but the body *is* of Christ" (Col. 2:17).

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22. *Since the law of Karma is impersonal, there can be no place for forgiveness of sins, but only relentless execution of this cosmic law.*
"By one's self the evil is done, by one's self one suffers; by one's self evil is left undone, by one's self one is purified. The pure and the impure stand and fall by themselves; no one can purify another" (Dhammapada, XII).

22. *Prayers of faith lead to forgiveness.*
"And Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2).
"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jas. 5:15).

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23. *Buddha, sensing death, explains to his disciple Ananda that his body shall dissolve and disappear.*
"And this mortal being, Ananda, has been relinquished, cast away, renounced, rejected and abandoned by the Tathagata. The remaining sum of life has been surrendered by him . . . saying, 'The final extinction of the Tathagata shall take place before long'" (Great Decease, III, 63).

23. *Jesus prophesied the resurrection of his own body.*
"For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall arise the third day" (Mark 9:31).
"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8).

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24. *Nirvana is not a state comparable to heaven or paradise. Buddha did not fully define the state of Nirvana, but it is the hope of every Buddhist to reach*

24. *Paradise and heaven are states of super-individual existence.*
"So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corrup-

it, to lose his individual identity in the Absolute and to be freed from rebirth.
"When Buddha experienced his Illumination, he attained the state of Nirvana while he was still alive. Nirvana does not require physical death. It is absolute extinction of the will, a kind of death in life, 'a dying out' of illusion, desire, and ignorance. Living Arhats have attained this state" (Bhikshu, *op. cit.*, question 84).

tion; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:42-44).

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25. *The last words of Buddha:*
"Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying, 'Decay is inherent in all component things!' Work out your salvation with diligence!" (Great Decease, VI: 10).

25. *The last words of Jesus:*
"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

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26. *Buddhism negates eternal life. It discourages speculation as to the beginning and the end of the world.*
"The Wheel of Existence is without known beginning" (Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 175).
"The religious life Malunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; nor does the religious life, Malunkyaputta, depend on the dogma that the world is not eternal" (Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 121).
"Vaccha, the theory that the world is eternal, is a jungle,

26. *Christianity affirms eternal life.*
The beginning and the end of the world are with God.
"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and Word was God."
"The same was in the beginning with God."
"All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3).
"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:15).
"And this is life eternal, that

a wilderness, a puppet show, a writhing, and a fetter, and is coupled with misery, ruin, despair, and agony, and does not tend to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom and Nirvana" (Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 124). "No creatures are eternal" (Dhammapada, XVIII).	they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent" (John 17:3). "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life" (I John 2:25). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

These 26 points should prove conclusively that neither Jesus nor his doctrine could have been derived from Buddhism, or Buddha. The great fundamentals are diametrically opposed. One teaches love, the other, non-attachment. One tempers the soul through suffering, the other teaches a path or technique to overcome suffering. One is based upon faith, the other upon knowledge. Christianity contains an element of optimism and hope; it promises peace and eternal life. Buddhism, in its rejection of life, and its negation of the afterlife, is more pessimistic.

PART III

13

Christ and Krishna

Hinduism, with its poetic quality and vast range, from ascetic world-rejection to sensual world-affirmation, has fascinated those Westerners who have come in contact with it. The principle of love in Hinduism (bhakti) which has had such a strong influence over Mahayana Buddhism lends itself even more ideally to comparisons with Christianity. We shall see in this chapter whether the claims of Hinduism as to universality, tolerance, ethics, spiritual consistency, and so forth can be sustained, especially in juxtaposition to the Christian world-view.

The startling similarity between the names Christ and Krishna has often attracted comment and, occasionally, engendered rash conclusions. To some Hindu writers, the Christ could be none other than a later Krishna. To some Western scholars, Krishna seemed to be patterned after Christ.

The well-known Sanskrit scholar Monier-Williams writes:

> Dr. Lorinser, expanding the views of Professor Weber and others concerning the influence of Christianity on the legends of Krishna, thinks that many of the sentiments of the Bhagavad-gita have been directly borrowed from the New Testament,

> copies of which, he thinks, found their way into India about the third century when he believes the poem to have been written. He even adopts the theory of a parallel in the names of Christ and Krishna . . .[1]

Monier-Williams does not fully concur with these views, but adds, "Some of his comparisons seem mere coincidences of language, which might occur independently. Nevertheless something may be said for Dr. Lorinser's theory." [2]

Louis Jaccoliot, on the other hand, wrote, "*Si la légende du Christna indoo est authentique, la légende du Christ juif ne peu qu'être apocryphe.*" [3] Unfortunately, Jaccoliot, still popular in certain circles, has neglected to inform us how one legend can be more authentic than another. Do not all legends contain one element in common, that is, the poetic, nonhistorical quality as transmitted by tradition? Jaccoliot too noticed the similarity between the names Christ and Krishna.[4]

Since very few defenders of the Christ-Krishna theory have troubled to scan carefully the derivation of the two names, we shall undertake to examine just what the name

[1] Monier-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 212, note 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[3] Louis Jaccoliot, *Christna et Le Christ* (Paris, 1877), p. 8.
[4] Krishna has been compared also to Osiris, Hercules, Apollo, Orpheus, and Maitreya. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New York, 1948), p. 96, considers the philosophy contained in the Gita as having a point in common even with Karl Marx. "Marx's criticism that philosophers interpret the world while the real task is to change it, does not apply to the author of the *Gita,* who gives us not only a philosophical interpretation, brahmavidya, but also a practical programme, yogasastra. Our world is not a spectacle to contemplate; it is a field of battle. Only for the *Gita,* improvement in the individual nature is the way to social betterment."

Krishna means, and to ascertain whether a parallel or dependence exists.

Under Jaccoliot's manipulation, Krishna becomes "Christna" to render obvious a similarity that does not exist. The letter "K" may be rare in French, but foreign terms and foreign proper names are always rendered in transliterations that are as close as possible to the original. The "Christna" spelling has been observed in other European languages which have the letter "K"; it is an artifice to prove a point. The insertion of the letter "T" has no basis whatsoever, and is further proof of a deliberate manipulation of a name to fortify a theory. The scholarly transliteration is "Krsna." We have retained the popular spelling only to facilitate pronunciation.

The Christ is a title, not a name. It derives from the Greek word *Christos*, the Anointed. The Hebrew equivalent is Messiah.

Krishna, on the other hand, is not a title but a proper name. The word means black, dark blue, and darkness. Krishna, the eighth son of Devaki, was born with black skin bearing a "peculiar mark." To the Buddhists, Krishna is a child of the black demons who are the enemies of the Buddha. (The son of Krishna, Mara the tempter, whose other name is Kama, is a personification of death, pestilence, and murder. Kama also figures as the god of the passion of love.)[5] The translation of the proper name of Krishna voids the Jaccoliot theory.

[5] Sir M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1899), pp. 306, 811.

In the Vishnu-Purana (Book II, Chapter VI) Krishna, the most popular god of India, lends his name to one of the hells. "He who causes impotence, trespasses on other lands, is impure, or who lives by fraud, is punished in the hell called (black) Krishna." [6] Krishna's name may allude to a pre-Aryan hero whom the Brahmins tolerated because of his popularity with the indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent, but for whom they expressed disdain by calling him black. The natives were called by the conquering Aryans black ones, monsters, and monkeys, and were eventually assigned to the lowest caste, the Shudras. The caste system was designed to protect the Aryans from intermixture with the conquered ones. The Sanskrit term for caste, Varna, means color.

Probably from contrast of color between the dark aboriginal tribes and their fair conquerors; in Rig-Veda especially applied

"He whom they call in the world Kamadeva, the owner of the various weapons, the flower-arrowed, the lord of the course of desire—it is he whom they also style Mara, the enemy of liberation." The Buddha-Karita, *The Sacred Books of the East*, XLIX, 137.

The Buddhists did not call Kama the "enemy of liberation" out of caprice, for as early as the Atharva-Veda, the fourth Veda, Kama was addressed as a primordial destructive force:

"Evil dreams, O Kama, and misfortune, O Kama, childlessness, ill-health and trouble, do thou, a strong lord, let loose upon him that designs evil against us!

"Slay thou, O Kama, those that are my enemies, hurl them down into blind darkness. Devoid of vigour, without sap let them all be; they shall not live a single day!

"With those auspicious and gracious forms of thine, O Kama, through which what thou wilst becometh real, with these do thou enter into us, and elsewhere send the evil thoughts!" *Sacred Books of the East*, XLII, 221-223.

[6] *The Vishnu-Purana*, translated by H. H. Wilson (London, 1863-1870), II, 219.

to the Arias and Dasas; but more properly applicable [now] to the four principal classes described in Manu's code, viz., Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras.[7]

The Hindu scholar, S. Radhakrishnan, wrote:

Yet with the best will in the world, to recast history, to allegorize facts and invent explanations, we cannot accept the life of Krsna as described in the Puranas. These incidents together with the story of Krsna's childhood and Balarama's weakness of drink clearly indicate the non-Aryan origin of Krsna. If today Krsna is the most popular Indian god, it is because the author of the Bhagavadgita makes him the spokesman of the highest religion and philosophy. When Krsna became a god, his other names, Kesava, Janardana, etc., were transferred to Vasudeva, and the stories of his being the son of Devaki were assigned to the original god, and even today we have contradictory descriptions of him as a high spiritual soul, with keen philosophical insight, and a popular hero not quite knightly in behaviour.[8]

[7] Sir M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 924.
[8] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 496.

14

The Krishna of the Mahabharata

The Mahabharata (which contains the Bhagavad-Gita), the great epic tale of India, commemorates the dynastic wars of two related families of northern India, an episode in the Aryan conquest of India. While some of the Aryan tribes settled in upper India, in the northwest of the Punjab, others advanced southwest into the midlands near the Ganges River, in the vicinity of modern Delhi. Among the former were the tribes of the Bharatas, the Kurus, and the Panchalas. In this region, the simple nature religion of the Vedas developed into a complex system of ritual, sacrifice, and priesthood. There the Bharatas gained their fame and religious supremacy. There the great fratricidal war was fought.

Generations of bards of the many princely courts, forest hermitages, schools, and assemblies circulated the story of this historic battle. They elaborated upon it until a great poet rendered it in metrical form. Only about one-fifth of the entire poem deals with the princely story; the remainder consists of priestly rules for sacrifice, mythological tales, legal maxims, and other extraneous matter. The more popular this hero saga became, the more assiduously did the Brahmin priests try to make it a vehicle for popular

instruction. They grafted upon the skeleton of this tale the flesh of their own religious precepts.[1]

In the Mahabharata we encounter a number of Krishnas: the mythological Krishna; the alleged author of the Mahabharata, Rishi Krishna Dwaipayana, also called Vyasa; Krishna Draupadi; and the distinctly different Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gita. Krishna Dwaipayana was said to be the son of a famous ascetic, the Rishi Parasara, and of the fish goddess, Satyavati. Because of his ugliness and pernicious stench, he was called Krishna, the black one.[2] Krishna Dwaipayana's consort was supposed to have closed her eyes in horror as he approached her. Thus his first child, Dhritirashtra, was born blind. The second consort paled, and a second son, Pandu (Pale One), was born. Dhritirashtra had one hundred sons, called the Kauravas. Pandu became the father of the famous five brothers, Yudishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva. They are called the Pandavas. Curiously enough, Draupadi, daughter of the King of Panchala, the polyandrous princess who married all five brothers, was also called Krishna.[3]

Krishna the mythological warrior-king appears in the Mahabharata as a friend of the Pandavas, particularly of Arjuna. He was the last ruler of the Yadavas, a celebrated

[1] M. Winternitz, *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur* (Leipzig, 1908), I, 255, 266.

[2] "Vyasa, being illegitimate, was called Kanina, the 'bastard.' From his complexion he received the name, Krishna, and from his birthplace he was called Dwaipayana."—John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion* (London, 1891), p. 370.

[3] Winternitz, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

clan descended from King Yayati, of the lunar folk. He led the Yadavas away from their pastoral life to found a kingdom at Dwaraka in Gujarat.

The Mahabharata depicts Krishna the warrior as slaying giants, demons, and kings, conquering numerous tribes, destroying entire towns and cities and stealing women. It has him entering the ocean filled with marine monsters to do combat. He overcomes Varuna, the old Vedic sky deity, the upholder of physical and moral order. In the serpent kingdom, Patala, he slew the demon Panchayana who had assumed the form of a conch. This conch Krishna later employed as his battle trumpet.

With Arjuna, Krishna helped the great Vedic fire god, Agni, to devour the entire forest of Kandava, thus defeating the protector of that forest, Indra, the dispenser of rain and the wielder of thunderbolts. Agni gave a mace and a fiery discus to Krishna, to Arjuna, the miraculous bow known as Ghandiva.

Krishna's defeat of Varuna and Indra, mythologically expressed, signified the end of an entire epoch in the religious life of India. Vedic religion, in which Varuna, Indra, and other gods reigned supreme, became obliterated. Hinduism as we know it today is a late development in the long religious and social history of India. The outstanding feature of the epic period was the merging of extremely old pre-Aryan elements with some of the tenets of the Aryans (Brahmins) who by this time had lost much of their vigor. It is the beginning of the eclectic phase in India, with its ensuing loss of depth and originality.

The Mahabharata relates that when Yudishtira lost his entire kingdom to the Kauravas in a gambling match, Krishna was away at war, and that when the Pandavas as a result were sent into exile, Krishna lamented his absence from that gambling match. He would have prevented it either by persuasion or by force. He vowed death to the instigators of that infamous deceit, asserting that the wicked deserve to be slain.

After the thirteen-year exile of the Pandavas had ended, the Kauravas refused to keep their promise to return the kingdom to Yudishtira. Thereupon preparations for war were made on a vast scale. Because both factions approached him simultaneously, Krishna, according to the duties of his caste, had to help both. To the leader of the Kauravas, Duryodana, he offered a large army, and to Arjuna, he offered himself, and became Arjuna's charioteer. He pledged however not to enter active combat.

When Arjuna hesitated to fight his grandsire Bishma,[4] Krishna said, "It is the eternal duty of a Kshatria to fight, to govern, and to sacrifice, but without hatred." When Arjuna's son Abimanyu was killed by the King of Sind, Arjuna vowed to kill that king by sunset of the next day or else kill himself. When it seemed that Arjuna would be unable to keep his vow, Krishna told him, "I shall

[4] Bishma is also transliterated as Bhishma. (Unified diacritical marks and standardized transliterations of Sanskrit names into Western languages have not been generally adopted.) The quotations on this and the next few pages are based upon the condensed version of the Mahabharata by E. Seeger, *The Five Brothers* (New York, 1948). For a more detailed translation of this epic see Roy Chandra Protab, *The Mahabharata* (Calcutta, 1886).

shroud the sun in a cloud of darkness so that they (the warriors shielding the king from Arjuna's wrath) will think that it has set and be less careful." This sinister stratagem enabled Arjuna to kill the King of Sind.

The next formidable obstacle to victory was the almost invincible prowess of Drona, the teacher in the art of warfare of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Krishna advised his friends as follows: "Therefore you sons of Pandu, cast virtue aside and let some man tell him that Ashvattaman (Drona's son) has been slain. Only thus can we win the victory!" Unwillingly Yudishtira gave his consent to this deceit. Bima killed an elephant named Ashvattaman and informed the old man that "Ashvattaman" is dead. Drona, knowing that Yudishtira would never lie, asked him to repeat Bima's statement. After some hesitation, Yudishtira said, "Ashvattaman is slain and lies on the bare ground like a young lion." After the word Ashvattaman, he added under his breath, "the elephant." This was Yudishtira's first and only lie, instigated by Krishna's advice. The grief-stricken Drona is thereupon easily killed.

The final obstacle to Pandava victory is the presence of the mighty Karna, half-brother of the Pandavas and rival of Arjuna. The hosts of both armies pause to watch the combat between Arjuna and Karna, each of whom had sworn to kill the other. The battle was uncertain until one of the wheels of Karna's chariot stuck in the mud. Karna tried in vain to pull the wheel free. Arjuna drew his bow and stood ready to kill him. He hesitated when

Karna reminded him of the rules of battle—one standing in a chariot never fights with one who is on the ground. Krishna spoke up at this point and directed Arjuna to let loose the deadly arrow.

In the final battle, between Bima and Duryodana, Krishna exclaimed, "Bima will never win if he fights fairly; therefore he must be unfair." He then advised Bima to break the thigh of Duryodana with the mace, even "though the blow is a foul one!"

Perhaps the best summation of Krishna's character was given by Ghandari, the wife of Dhritirashtra. In her grief for the death of all her sons, she cried:

> The Pandavas and the Kauravas, O Krishna, have both been destroyed. Why did you not care? You could have prevented this destruction, for you had a vast army and many followers and yet you did not stop it! Nay, more . . . all those unrighteous acts whereby the Pandavas slew Bishma, and Drona, Karna and Duryodana, they did at your behest, urged on by you.

She cursed Krishna.

> Since you did not care to stop the slaughter of these cousins, you shall be the slayer of your own kinsmen: thirty-six years after this, O Krishna, you shall cause the death of your sons and friends and kinsmen, and perish in a shameful way yourself. The women of your realm shall weep and cry even as the women of the Baratas are weeping now!

The curse was fulfilled. Thirty-six years later, the Yadavas, in a civil war, killed each other. Krishna, wounded, retreated to a forest to rest. There he was mistaken for a deer by a hunter and slain.

15

The Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gita

The Bhagavad-Gita, or Song of the Blessed,[1] celebrates one moment in the gigantic battle the Mahabharata describes. It is a small poem, consisting of three sections, each section being subdivided into six chapters, which appears as an insertion in the Bhismaparvan of the Mahabharata. In it Krishna pauses in the battle and holds a philosophical discourse with Arjuna whose chariot he leads. In these lofty verses, which are among the most popular in India, Krishna appears as a god who teaches Arjuna caste duty, yoga, and love.

It is not a generally observed fact that immediately preceding the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna advises Arjuna to pray for success in the battle, not to Vishnu or to Brahma, but to Durga, the bloodthirsty and terrible consort of Shiva. Durga is the fierce shakti of Shiva, the god whose symbol is the lingam, or phallus. She is shown riding on a tiger, and in her black form as Kali she is represented with a hideous face, bloody lips, and bloody body encircled by snakes and adorned with a chain of skulls. It is to her that

[1] Gita, song; Bhagavad, from *bhaga*, lord, blessed. Hence the title Bhagavant, heavenly, august, and lordly, applied to several Hindu deities.

human sacrifices were offered, and the Tantric rites were performed to propitiate this terrible goddess.

> The holy one [Krishna] said, cleansing thyself, O mighty-armed one, utter on the eve of battle, the hymn to Durga for the defeat of the foe! Arjuna said, I bow to thee O leader of *yogins*, O thou that art identical with Brahman. O Kali, O wife of Kapala [crowned with skulls], O thou art of a black and tawny hue. O wife of the universal destroyer, I bow to thee. O fierce one, O giver of victory, O victory's self! I bow to thee that art fond of battle! O Durga, O thou that dwelleth in inaccessible regions! With inner soul cleansed I praise thee, O great goddess! Let victory always attend me through thy grace on the field of battle! In inaccessible regions, where there is fear, in place of difficulty, in the abodes of thy worshipers and in the nether regions (Patala) thou always dwelleth! . . . The goddess said, within a short time thou shalt conquer thy foes, O Pandava! O invincible one, thou hast Narayana (again) for aiding thee! Thou art incapable of being defeated by foes, even by the wielder of the thunderbolt himself.[2]

The worship of these female consorts of the gods has done much to undermine the Hindu religions as well as the later phases of Buddhism. Radha, Rukmini, Jambavati, and Satyabhama are Krishna's shaktis besides the 16,000 wives who bore him 180,000 sons. Shiva's shakti is known by the names Kali, Durga, Parvati, Bhavani, Bhairavi, and Uma. In the later books of the Mahabharata and especially in the Puranas an attempt was made to merge the cult of Shiva with the cults of Vishnu and Krishna. Therefore Krishna, Vishnu, and Shiva share the title Hari-Hara

[2] *The Mahabharata*, trans. by Roy Chandra Protab (Calcutta, 1886), VI, 71f.

in common. Narayana, whose aid Durga offered to Arjuna, has the same titles as Vishnu with whom he has also the nimbus in common. Philosophically, he is "All-soul," preserver and destroyer; as avatar, he saves; as waker and maker, he creates; as Rudra (death), he destroys. "Thus it is he who as Mare's head destroys the world, a curious role for a preserver." [3] The Vishnu Purana states:

> The energy of Vishnu . . . presides in the sun . . . the solar luminary that appears in every month is nothing else than the very supreme energy of Vishnu.[4]

He is still the sun "having thousand rays of flames," he is the fiery sun disc which he uses as his chief weapon.

In the sixth book of the Mahabharata, Krishna still advises Arjuna to pray to Durga, the terrible wife of Shiva, the principle of destruction and death and the personification of fear. Only in the Gita does Krishna suddenly change character and assume a supreme position, which implies that it is a partisan insertion into the epic. Whereas the Gita refers only to certain philosophical discourses between Krishna and Arjuna, in the Mahabharata his life and exploits are told more comprehensively. In it his life is told in great, sometimes fantastic, and erotic detail.

In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna is a god whose utterances are considered those of the deity, who instructs men (only the warrior Arjuna!) in a bodily form. In the earliest "inspired" collection of Aryan religious poems the figure

[3] E. W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Strasbourg, 1915), p. 207.
[4] *The Vishnu-Purana,* II, p. 295f.

of the god Krishna is as yet unknown, instead we find his name linked to bards and demons.[5] That Krishna was a new god in the Hindu pantheon we may infer from Arjuna's address to Krishna in the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita. "Thy birth, dear Lord, was in these later days." The Krishna of the Gita instructs Arjuna and rationalizes his participation in this war of extermination between two related families with metaphysical discourses on the self and the non-self, and on the deathlessness of the spirit.

The transformation of Krishna, the historical warrior-king into Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, took more than a thousand years to accomplish. Vishnu, who occupies a distinctly minor position in the Rig-Veda,[6] slowly

[5] According to Richard Garbe, the name Krishna occurs in the Rig-Veda as the name of a bard. See his *Bhagavad-Gita* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 27. "The earliest mention of Krishna, the son of Devaki, is in the Chandogya Upanishad, where he appears as a scholar. There was a Rishi of the name who was a son of Viswaka. There was also a great Assura [demon] so named, who with 10,000 followers committed fearful devastation, until he was defeated and skinned by Indra. In another Vedic hymn, 50,000 Krishnas are said to have been slain, and it is added in another that his pregnant wives were slain with him that he might leave no posterity. This is supposed to have reference to the Rakshasas or to the dark colored aborigines of India."—John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion* (London, 1891), p. 160.

[6] "Visnu was one of the gods of the Rig-Veda, and probably, like most of them, a nature-god. He seems to have been a personification of the sun. But the Rig-Veda contains a number of sun-gods (perhaps originally belonging to different tribes, or else representing different aspects of the sun's power). Visnu is one of the less prominent and less important ones. He is distinctly a minor figure in the Rig-Veda. We hear that he measures the universe in three great strides, which refers figuratively to the sun's progress across the sky."—Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 31f.

rose to a supreme position in medieval Hinduism. In the process, he assumed the names and attributes of earlier gods, but he never lost his original character as the personification of the physical sun. Vishnu is described as "four-armed" or "great-eater." He wears a diadem of "solar glory." He is the unicorn, one-horned, and as bull, many-horned. His vehicle is the sun-bird Garuda. Vishnu is usually represented as either resting upon the serpent Ananta, or as a comely youth of a dark blue color holding the conch shell, the discus, the club, or the lotus.

Of the ten great avataras or incarnations of Vishnu, the most famous are Rama and Krishna. Later sectarian books claim twenty-two or more incarnations. Even Buddha is presented as an avatar of Vishnu. When Buddhism rose to prominence in India, the Brahmin priests annexed Buddha rather than admit his powerful opposition to their organized priesthood, their sacrifices, and their enforced caste system. They said that Vishnu appeared as Buddha in order to encourage demons and wicked men to despise the Vedas, to reject the caste system, and to deny the existence of the many gods. In this strange manner, the demons and the wicked men were to effect their own destruction! This rationalization induced many Hindus to place statues of Buddha beside those of Shiva and Vishnu. Thus the Gautama Buddha was to be seen in the company of the very gods whom he fought, and attended by a priest class which he despised so deeply.

Krishna emerged as a god at a comparatively late stage in Hindu mythology, becoming popular in India only after

the decline of Buddhism.[7] His followers say he unites various aspects, such as God of Truth, Upholder of the Caste System, God of Love, and Lord of Yoga. As we shall see, the true roles of Krishna are the principle of darkness and Prince of Death. He cannot be properly linked to Christ, the epitome of love and peace.

It is well known that only the four Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads are considered "inspired." All later writings and epics are traditional. The Bhagavad-Gita, one of the last additions to the Mahabharata, is a part of tradition. In spite of its great poetic beauty, it cannot be considered "inspired" even from the Hindu point of view.

Radhakrishnan does not consider the Mahabharata or the Bhagavad-Gita to be esoteric works, intended for the initiated.

> The Mahabharata is sometimes called the fifth Veda. It is looked upon as a work of authority on conduct and society. It is intended to teach even the weak and the lowly the rules of ethical conduct. The Buddhist scriptures were thrown open to all, while the sacred books of the Brahmins were confined to the three higher classes. Hence the necessity for a fifth Veda open to all. [The Bhagavad-Gita] is not looked upon as a sruti, or a revealed scripture, but is regarded as a smriti, or a tradition.[8]

In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna the god shines forth as

[7] "It is clear that the editors of the Mahabharata felt that some popular hero must be made the rallying center to counteract the mighty influence of the heretical sects. The figure of Krsna was ready to hand." —S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London, 1948), I, 495.

[8] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 482, 519.

a figure of great charm. Yet this forms but a small part of the Mahabharata, the Great History of the Bharatas. It was inserted into the gigantic, rambling epic shortly before or at the time of the rise of Christianity.

To some Hindus (and Westerners) Krishna is a world savior of the same rank as Christ. T. L. Vaswani writes:

> The orthodox Hindu has always held that Krishna came to open a new age (*yuga*) and the Hindu like the Christian looks forward to the coming of the Lord again, but at the close not of this *world* but of this *age*. . . . Kaliyuga, as it is called . . . and in *another* Body to effect a New Synthesis, to initiate a new world-civilization, to introduce a new moral Force, to unfold the issues of a New Dispensation of the Spirit.[9]

The age that Krishna inaugurated is the Kaliyuga, the present world cycle according to the Hindu reckoning. What Mr. Vaswani fails to point out is that it is a *black age*, an age of evil, as "Kali" indicates. According to Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (page 306), Krishna also means black age, wicked and evil. Thus the advent of Krishna is the advent of an era of darkness and evil, of strife and dissension.[10] He appeared at a time of war, and through Arjuna he participated in that war.

Krishna, the God of Love in the Bhagavad-Gita, and Arjuna's guide, thus addresses the Pandu prince (chap. 11):

> "Arise! obtain renown! *destroy thy foes*
> Fight for the kingdom waiting thee when thou hast vanquished those.

[9] T. L. Vaswani, *Sri Krishna, The Saviour of Humanity* (Madras, 1921), pp. 75f.

[10] Compare: "For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace" (I Cor. 14:33).

By me they fall . . . not thee! the stroke of death is dealt them now,
Even as they show thus gallantly; *my instrument art thou!*
Strike, strong-armed Prince, at Drona! at Bhishma strike! *deal death*
O Karna, Jyadratha; stay all their warlike breath!
'Tis I who bid them perish! Thou wilt but slay the slain;
Fight! they must fall, and thou must live, victor upon this plain!" [11]

Krishna's true role begins to emerge. He is the will, Arjuna the action. Krishna plans and Arjuna executes. Krishna prepares death; Arjuna is the instrument. There can be no greater contrast to Christ. Christ brings hope; Krishna, death. Christ's message is one of love, peace, forgiveness; Krishna exalts war and makes another the instrument of death.

ARJUNA:

Killing these
Must breed but anguish, Krishna! If they be
Guilty, we shall grow guilty by their deaths;
Their sins will light on us, if we shall slay
Those sons of Dhritirashtra, and our kin. . . .

KRISHNA:

How hath this weakness taken thee? Whence springs
The inglorious trouble, shameful to the brave,
Barring the path of virtue? Nay, Arjun!
Forbid thyself to feebleness! It mars
Thy warrior name! *Cast off the coward fit!*
Wake! Be thyself! Arise, *Scourge of thy Foes!*[12]

[11] *The Song Celestial, or Bhagavad-Gita,* trans. by Sir E. Arnold in *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East,* IX, 166f. Italics are the author's throughout.
[12] *Ibid.,* chap. 1, 2, pp. 122f.

After this direct reply to Arjuna's moral scruples about "mutual slaughter" Krishna offers a metaphysical interpretation of Arjuna's participation in war:

KRISHNA:

With spirit deathless, endless, infinite,
They perish. Let them perish, Prince! and fight!
He who shall say, "Lo! I have slain a man!"
He who shall think, "Lo! I am slain!" those both
Know naught! Life can not slay. Life is not slain!
Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit forever;
Death hath not touched it all, dead though the house of it seems! [13]

Following this lofty discourse on the spirit which cannot be slain, Krishna returns again to the more direct aspects of war by telling Arjuna it is a "lawful fight," a "gate unto heaven," and that it would be a sin to avoid his duty and not slay his kin:

Do thy part!
Be mindful of thy name, and tremble not!
Naught better can betide a martial soul
Than lawful war; *happy the warrior*
To whom comes joy of battle . . . comes, as now,
Glorious and fair, unsought; opening for him
A gateway unto Heav'n. But, if thou shunn'st
This honorable field . . . a Kshattriya. . . .
If, knowing thy duty and thy task, thou bidd'st
Duty and task go by . . . that shall be sin!
. . . . . .

[13] *Ibid.*, chap. 2, pp. 124f.

Profit or ruin, victory or defeat:
So minded, gird thee to the fight, for so
Thou shalt not sin! [14]

We must remember that neither the Mahabharata nor the Gita is considered to be revealed (sruti) scripture. Rather, they are popular poems (smriti). One may well question therefore whether a "Fifth Veda open to all" would contain any esoteric revelations. Krishna speaks to Arjuna on the battlefield on the eve of the great combat which is the *raison d'être* for this discourse. His discourse on the deathlessness of the spirit (Chap. II) is a classic Upanishadic concept and would have been familiar to any young man of the warrior caste educated by Brahmins.[15] Krishna's role is interesting insofar as he spurs Arjuna to fight. The epiphany of Krishna as a god occurs only in the fourth chapter of the Gita. It is in the form of a *self-revelation.* Krishna declares, "Albeit I be Unborn, undying, indestructible, the Lord of all things living; not the

[14] *Ibid.*, chap. 2, pp. 126f.

[15] "When a body of one of the three higher castes attained a certain age, considered as 'years of discretion' he was 'initiated,' i.e., admitted under solemn ceremonies into the religious community, after which he was placed under a *guru* or spiritual guide, invariably a Brahmin, for instruction in the Veda. This initiation was regarded as the youth's second birth, his birth into the spiritual life, wherefore the three higher castes took pride in the appellation of 'twice-born' (*dvi-ja*). From this distinction the Shudras, of course, were excluded. This is declared most explicitly in Manu's code: 'The Brahman, the Kashatriya, and the Vaishya castes are the twice-born ones, but the fourth, the Shudra, has no second birth. There is no fifth caste . . . Kshatriyas prosper not without Brahmans; Brahmans prosper not without Kshatriyas. Brahmans and Kshatriyas, being closely united, prosper in this world and the next.' "—Z. A. Ragozin, *Vedic India,* pp. 278f.

less." [16] In the seventh chapter, Krishna states, "Know I am Adhibhuta, Lord of Life, and Adhidaiva, Lord of all the Gods, and Adhiyajna, Lord of Sacrifice." [17] In the eighth chapter, Krishna presents himself to Arjuna finally as the Supreme Brahma. "I Brahma am! The One Eternal God." [18] Previous to the fourth chapter, Krishna had not *revealed himself* as yet to Arjuna as the God and faithful to the meaning of his name, he had offered to Arjuna but one goal—death.

When, in the first chapter, Krishna is called "God," it is the compiler who speaks, for Krishna had not yet revealed himself to Arjuna as such! How, then, did the compiler know that Krishna, the charioteer, was the Supreme Deity? In the eleventh chapter, Arjuna supplicates:

> Make thyself visible, Lord of all prayers!
> Show me thy very self, the Eternal God!

KRISHNA:

> Gaze, then, thou Son of Pritha! *I manifest for thee*
> . . . . . .
> Wonders unnumbered, Indian Price! *revealed to none save thee.*
> . . . . . .
> Yea! *Thou hast seen,* Arjuna! because I loved thee well,
> *The secret countenance* of me, revealed by mystic spell,
> Shining, and wonderful, and vast, majestic, manifold
> *Which none save thou in all the years had favor to behold;*
> . . . . . .
> That mortal eye should bear to view the Immortal Soul unclad,
> Prince of the Kurus! *This was kept for thee alone!* . . .

[16] *The Gita, op. cit.*, p. 135.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

. . . . . As I before have been
So will I be again for thee; with lightened heart behold!
Once more I am thy Krishna, the form thou knew'st of old! [19]

If Krishna manifested himself only gradually to Arjuna, if he revealed himself to none but the warrior, if his secret countenance *no one* had the favor to behold in *all* the years, how could the compiler have known in the first chapter what Arjuna himself had not yet realized . . . that the charioteer was actually a god?

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 161f.

16

Other Aspects of Krishnaism

Remarkably enough, the first chapter of the Gita does not begin with the discourse between Arjuna and Krishna but with the blind king Dhritirashtra asking his charioteer Sanjaya to report the proceedings of the battle. Only through Sanjaya do we learn what Krishna told Arjuna in secret.[1] After the first chapter, entitled "The Book of the Distress of Arjuna," we encounter Sanjaya introducing the second chapter, "The Book of Doctrines." [2]

Except for some comments on Arjuna's vision in the eleventh chapter, it is not until the last, the eighteenth chapter, that Sanjaya speaks again:

SANJAYA:

"Thus gathered I the gracious speech of Krishna, O my king!
Thus have I told, with heart a-thrill, this wise and wondrous thing
By great Vyasa's learning writ, how Krishna's self made known
The Yoga, being Yoga's Lord. So is the high truth shown!
And aye, when I remember, O Lord, my King, again
Arjuna and the God in talk, and all this holy strain,
Great is my gladness: when I muse that splendor, passing speech,
Of Hari, visible and plain, there is no tongue to reach

[1] *The Gita*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

My marvel, and my love and bliss. O Archer-Prince! all hail!
O Krishna, Lord of Yoga! surely there shall not fail
Blessing, and victory, and power, for thy most mighty sake,
Where this song comes of Arjun, and how with God he spake." [3]

Thus a distinctly minor character, the charioteer Sanjaya, tells us the story. It is he who reports to the King the famous discourses between Arjuna and Krishna. He is able to do so only *after* Vyasa, the compiler, gives him the grace of second sight. Radhakrishnan translates this verse (No. 75) from the eighteenth chapter of the Gita in the following manner: "By the grace of Vyasa, I heard this supreme secret, this yoga taught by Krsna himself, the Lord of yoga in person." He is able to perceive "this supreme secret" only after he had been endowed with second sight by the author so that he might "see and hear from a distance all that transpired on the battlefield." Sanjaya is but a convenient literary device to present Krishna as a supreme god. Sanjaya's role is explained even better by Swami Nikhilananda:

> King Dhritarashtra wanted to be informed of the events on the battlefield. The blind kind was offered special sight by the sage Vyasa; but he refused the boon, for he knew that the death of his near and dear ones would be more than he could bear. Therefore Sanjaya acted as his reporter. Since the battlefield was too vast for any mortal eye and two complex for any human mind, Sanjaya was given supernatural vision, by a boon of Vyasa, to see and hear all that happened there.[4]

The yoga philosophy in the Bhagavad-Gita and the

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 196.
[4] Swami Nikhilananda, *Bhagavad-Gita* (New York, 1944), p. 41.

figure of Krishna are as ancient as India herself. The Brahmins were unable to eradicate this hero from the memory of the people and his popularity was then exploited by making him a vehicle for the teachings of the Vishnuite priesthood. The Bhagavad-Gita is an example of that clever manipulation.

> Vyasa made the best of a bad bargain and wove into the colossal poem the floating mass of epic tradition, hero worship, stirring scenes of strife and warfare, dressing up the new gods of uncertain origin and doubtful morality in the "cast-off clothes" of the Vedic deities.[5]

In the Mahabharata, Krishna prevails as the dark principle, death. Something of this original character still clings to him in the first three chapters of the Gita. The discourses on the soul and love, placed in the mouth of Krishna, are the substance of the fifteen subsequent chapters. These philosophical elements introduced by the Brahmins, attempt to transform the pre-Aryan hero Krishna, the black one, into an incarnation of Vishnu, the sun-god.

> In this work [Bhagavad-Gita] he has all the attributes of a full-fledged monotheistic deity, and at the same time . . . the attributes of the Upanisadic Absolute. In other words, the popular God is philosophized into a figure who can appeal to both the higher and the lower circles of the population. Therein lies the strength of Krsnaism in later India; it is many-sided enough to satisfy the religious requirements of almost any man, whatever his intellectual or social status may be.[6]

[5] Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, I, p. 480.
[6] F. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Harvard, 1944), p. 30f.

The Gita emphasizes faith and love (bhakti) of the deity, besides karma-yoga and jnana-yoga. The ancient technique of yoga, with its emphasis upon control of both body and mind as a prerequisite for meditation upon the Supreme Spirit, was modified in the Gita and in later writings to the performance of various simple acts and loving thoughts in the name of Krishna. Thus Krishna as Lord of Yoga acquired a new role—Lord of Love. "Worship of the Personal God is recommended as the easier way open to all, the weak and lowly, the illiterate and the ignorant. The sacrifice of love is not so difficult as the tuning of the will to the Divine purpose or ascetic discipline or the strenuous effort of thinking." [7] The Krishna of the Gita was especially designed for those who found the Upanishadic philosophy too taxing, and the Buddhist discipline too severe.

It presents an easier way of salvation, and an antidote to counteract the anti-Brahminical Buddhist philosophy with its casteless and all-inclusive appeal. Such an approach is essentially contradictory to the long tradition of Hindu philosophical speculation on God in the Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Principal Upanishads.

After the comments of the mystic Ramanuja, during the eleventh century A.D., the worship of Krishna gained its great popularity in medieval Hinduism. A simple act of faith, a sincere invocation of the divine name was considered sufficient to cancel an entire lifetime of religious and moral indifference, and even crime.

[7] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New York, 1948), p. 59.

> In the Puranas it is enough, even in the case of the greatest criminal, when at the point of death, to pronounce by chance some syllables forming one of the names of Vishnu or Shiva, in order to attain salvation. . . . In the Narada Pancharatra, one of the books which displays most enthusiasm in professing the doctrine of *bhakti,* a Brahman of no great faith, after having unsuspectingly partaken of the remains of some consecrated food and given some of it to his wife, is himself eaten up by a tiger, the wife burns herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, and the three participants, the Brahman, his wife, and the tiger being purified by this unconscious act of communion, go straight to *goloka,* "the world of the cows" or the supreme heaven of Krishna.[8]

Heavenly bliss can be attained without acts, discipline, prayer, service or love. It is enough to utter one of the names of the god, or to partake accidentally of consecrated food; salvation had become easy indeed in the later Krishna cult.

Medieval Hinduism developed many aspects of Krishna worship which were unknown when the Gita was written. The cult of the mother and child, Devaki and Krishna, attained greatest popularity during this period. Emphasis was also placed upon the erotic aspects of Krishna's episodes with the gopis or cow-girls and many devotees attempted to emulate them. In the cult of the mother and child some enthusiasts perceive a Christian influence. However that might be, one thing is certain: the devotion to the Madonna and Child was totally unknown either in the primitive Christian church or in India's epic period.[9]

[8] A. Barth, *The Religions of India,* trans. by J. Ward (Boston, 1882), p. 228.

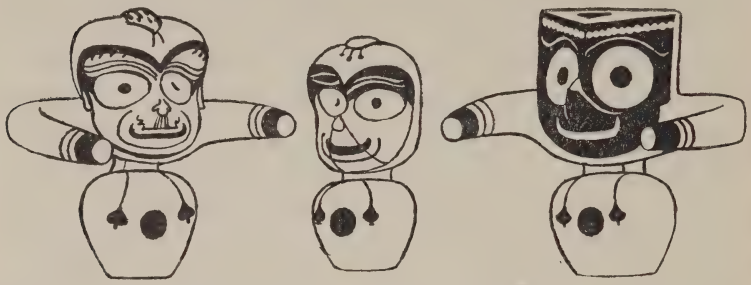
[9] "We believe that the traces of a Christian influence on the myth of

Krishna, as a local hero, or chieftain who was deified, antedates Jesus the Christ by more than 1000 years. This Krishna is a principle of darkness, an age of evil, a dealer of death—as his name and life indicate. Obviously he could not have influenced the Gospel story of the life of Christ. Jesus, called the Christ, led a public life during the three crucial years prior to his crucifixion, was celibate, spoke to and was known by multitudes, had twelve disciples, taught a doctrine of love toward God and to one's neighbor, preached forgiveness and peace, and lived in obedience to the Heavenly Father. In short, Christ embodies qualities and principles for which we look in vain in the person and legend of Krishna.

In addition to being worshiped as a warrior-prince, a god of love, and a child, Krishna has yet another form. This is as Jaganatha (Juggernaut), "Lord of the World." This form grew to immense popularity following medieval Hinduism, obscuring even the earlier forms of Krishna worship. This latest phase of Krishnaism connects directly with the earliest emergence of Krishna as a pre-Aryan hero and a Prince of Death. The center of this worship is at Orissa, in Puri, Bengal. It centers around three exceedingly strange fetishes made of wood. These are Jaganatha, his brother Balarama, and his sister Subhadra.

Krishna are highly problematic; that they do not with any clearness appear till much later in certain peculiarities of worship, and that at any rate this influence has told on points of such secondary importance that the Christian derivation of the doctrine and the sentiments of faith such as they have developed in the sectarian religions must be set aside as absolutely improbable."—A. Barth, *The Religions of India,* p. 224.

The three idols have overgrown heads, painted black with enormous eyes, and stumped arms and barrel-like torsos.



BALARAMA, SUBHADRA AND JAGANATHA (KRISHNA)

Several popular legends account for them:

After the famous battle in which the Pandavas and the Kauravas were wiped out, Krishna the warrior king returned to the Dwaraka and issued a proclamation forbidding the use of wine by his people. Thereupon portents and fearful signs appeared. Alarm spread among the people of Dwaraka. Krishna then induced them to go to Prabhasa on the seashore to propitiate the deity. Krishna gave permission for one day's indulgence in wine drinking. As a consequence, a great drunken brawl broke out in which Krishna's son Pradyumna (Kama) was slain in his father's presence, and nearly all the chiefs of the Yadavas were killed. Krishna himself escaped from the scene wounded. He was killed accidentally in a forest by a hunter, Jaras, who mistook him for a deer. All the Yadavas who were present in Dwaraka after the death of Krishna

perished when a tremendous tidal wave from the ocean submerged it.

Krishna's body was left to rot under a tree until some pious people found his bones and placed them in a box. A devout king, Indradyumna, was directed by Vishnu to form an image of Jaganatha and to place the bones of Krishna within. Vismakarma (a Vedic god, personification of creative power) the architect of the gods, agreed to create a suitable image on condition that he remain undisturbed until its completion. After fifteen days, the impatient king disturbed the divine architect at his work. Vismakarma thereupon left the image unfinished. The king prayed to Brahma for assistance. Brahma gave the image eyes and a soul and acted as high priest at its consecration.[10] This legend mentions only one image, but three were worshiped at Orissa.

Another legend relates how Basa, a fowler and a servant of Jaganatha, discovered him in the form of a dark blue stone at the foot of a banyan tree. A third legend states that Jaganatha himself appeared to the king Indradyumna and revealed the image to him in a block of wood washed up on the seashore. The artisan entrusted with the task failed to carve this block of wood into the image. Then Vishnu appeared disguised as an aged carpenter. The king shut the god up in the temple to finish the idol. Vishnu requested twenty-one days in which to complete the work, but the curious queen persuaded the king to open the doors

[10] Dowson, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 164.

before the appointed time and the image was found unfinished.

Merely to behold these strange images is said to cleanse the pilgrim from all sin. After the full moon at the great feast days, the three idols are placed upon huge cars and drawn through the streets by thousands of people who hope thereby to gain merit. These strange idols were probably extremely old (pre-Aryan?) village fetishes that had been adapted to serve the Vishnu cult.

The great temple of Jaganatha dates from the eleventh century A.D. although the spot had great sanctity before that time. Cave temples have been discovered in Orissa that date back to the second and third centuries B.C. The temple contains four chambers: a large hall where bulkier oblations are made, a pillared hall for musicians and dancing girls (who double as temple prostitutes),[11] a hall of audience where pilgrims assemble to gaze upon the images, and lastly, the dark sanctuary which is surmounted by a tower 192 feet high and which carries on its summit the wheel (chakra) and the flag (dhvaja) of Vishnu.

The pilgrims entering the large walled-in compound by the east gate are required to circumambulate the temple several times. The priests direct their gaze toward the whitewashed tower, the ornaments, and the carvings glaring in the intense sunlight so that their sight is impaired on entering the dim sanctuary and they cannot perceive the image of the god. The priests explain that this inability to see in the dark is due to their bad consciences and sinful

[11] Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

lives. The well-known story of a Calcutta rajah will illustrate the priests' intentions. Having perceived nothing at his first visit, the rajah was reminded to purge himself of sin by prayer and to offer a substantial gift to the temple. He thereupon prayed for a day and a night. He promised that if he should see the god, he would build a badly needed highway from Calcutta to Puri with shelters at various points along the way for the pilgrims. The rajah then re-entered the temple, but this time he was led by the priests directly into the sanctum. Naturally he beheld the god very well. The rajah kept his word and constructed the road.[12]

Before entering the temple of Jaganatha the worshiper usually prays before the shrine of Durga, as Krishna had directed Arjuna to pray to her before he commenced the battle. It was to her that human sacrifices were offered in ancient times. Every year, at Orissa, a she-goat is sacrificed in her honor.[13] It is the only blood sacrifice permitted at this temple and is symbolical of the human sacrifices of-

[12] E. O. Martin, *The Gods of India* (New York, 1913), pp. 155f.

[13] "It may be noteworthy that the notorious, secret robber-strangler bands of India, the "thugs," prayed to Durga for success also. These marauding bands consisted of respectable men, Brahmins, and some stray Moslems, who fell upon caravans whose male members they strangled and whose goods they stole. The thugs would not initiate a new member, or commit murder before the goddess granted them certain favorable signs. The only religious symbol employed by them was the consecrated pickaxe used for digging graves in which the goddess was believed to reside. After successful missions, a percentage of the haul was presented to the goddess in one of her temples. Every thug was convinced that Durga had created the secret sect and that she saved them from being detected, punished, and from disaster. The earliest historical references to these robber bands date from the 13th

fered to her as recently as the first half of the nineteenth century. According to von Glasenapp, this terrible form of worship was abolished by the English who, however, had to place guards in the temple to foil this custom effectively.[14] The Tantric (left-hand) rites celebrated in honor of this bloodthirsty goddess consisted of the famous "five M's": wine (madya), fish (matsya), meat (mansa), grain and mystic gestures (mudra) and sexual intercourse (maithuna). This last aspect had great importance since Durga is also considered the goddess of love.

There is a curious legend, which is represented iconographically, of Krishna being nursed by Durga to avert the effect of the poison he had received in subduing the serpent Kaliya.[15] This five-headed serpent king infested the banks of the river Yamuna with numerous attendant serpents. His mouth vomited fire and smoke and he terrorized the country and the shepherds. Krishna, while yet a child, fought him. The shepherds feared for Krishna's life when Balarama, his brother, called upon him to exercise his hidden divine powers. He subdued the serpent king by placing his foot upon the serpent's head until Kaliya acknowledged Krishna's superior power. It is interesting that Krishna did not kill the serpent, but only banished him into the ocean. The venom of Kaliya had affected

century A.D., but they may be earlier. They flourished in India till they were destroyed by Lord William Bentinck's government in 1830." —Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* XII, 259. See also Meadows Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug* (London, 1873).

[14] H. von Glasenapp, *Heilige Stätten Indiens* (Munich, 1928), p. 42.

[15] C. Coleman, *The Mythology of the Hindus* (London, 1832), p. 99.

Krishna, however, and Durga cured him by administering her milk to the child.

The image of Jaganatha is black, that of Balarama, white, and that of Subhadra, yellow. They are dressed, bathed and fed daily, then put to bed overnight. The image of Jaganatha is dressed differently on the various feasts throughout the year. Sometimes, it is dressed as a small boy, to recall the child-Krishna; sometimes as a dwarf, to commemorate Vishnu's dwarf incarnation; and occasionally a large elephant nose is affixed to the idol to represent Ganesha, the elephant-headed god who was the child of Shiva and Durga. Within the temple enclosure are many smaller temples and shrines. Some of these are dedicated to Vishnu in his many avataras, some to Shiva with the lingam, and one each to Durga, Lakshmi, Surya-Narayana. The latter shrine contains, besides the sun and moon gods, a stone image of a sitting Buddha,[16] demonstrating the growing eclecticism of medieval and modern Krishnaism.

[16] M. M. Ganguly, *Orissa and Her Remains* (Calcutta, 1912), p. 429.

17

The True Krishna

The higher concepts in the Bhagavad-Gita are derived from older philosophical speculations foreshadowed in the (closed) Upanishads, the inexhaustible mine from which all the later Hindu metaphysical systems drew their basic concepts. Everything from deep pessimism toward life, transmigration of souls, duality, nonduality, yoga, and knowledge of the absolute can be found in them. The Upanishads are mystical and speculative, beyond the reach of the lower castes who were neither permitted to hear them nor able to read them for themselves. After the impact of Buddhism, with its nonesoteric doctrine and refutation of Brahmin sophistication and spiritual exclusiveness, an attempt was made with the Bhagavad-Gita to create a popular deity who would represent both the abstract soul of the universe and a personal, lovable god, and to fuse a pantheistic doctrine and those of action and contemplation. Krishna was restored to the people, transformed by the caste of the spiritual rulers. Through the association with Vishnu, the original black principle of war and death, the last scion of the lunar clan, he became at the hands of the Brahmins a god of the sun whose greatest appeal was among the dejected, the lower castes

who were not privileged to participate in any form of the teachings of the Vedas or the Upanishads. The accent in the Gita is upon love and intense personal devotion rather than upon philosophy and metaphysics. This is reflected in one of Krishna's other names, Hrsikesa, Lord of the Senses.[1]

Thus Krishna became everything for every man. He is said to be love personified, yet he destroys.

O Eyes of God! O Head!
My strength of soul is fled,
Gone is heart's force, rebuked is mind's desire!
When I behold thee so,
With awful brows a-glow,
With burning glance, and lips lightened by fire
. . . . . .
Thou Refuge of the World!
Lo! to the cavern hurled
Of thy wide-opened throat, and lips white-tushed,
I see our noblest ones,
Great Dhritirashtra's sons,
Bhishma, Drona, and Karna, caught and crushed!
. . . . . .
The Kings and Chiefs drawn in,
That gaping gorge within;
The best of both these armies torn and riven!
Between thy jaws they lie,
Mangled full bloodily,
Ground into dust and death!
. . . . . .

[1] Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 87. "We hear in Vaisnava poetry the constant refrain, 'I am become a harlot for thy sake.' Many a folk tale is interpreted in this mystic manner, and incidents of doubtful morality are metamorphosed into relations of God and the individual soul."—Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 496.

Ah, Vishnu! make me know
Why is thy visage so?
Who art thou, feasting thus upon thy dead?
. . . . . .
Who? awful Deity!
I bow myself to thee,
Namostu Te Devavara! Prasid! [2] (Chap. XI)

He is the truth, yet he deceives; he is life, yet he is death; he is time, yet he is timeless. He is the guide, yet he misleads. He takes credit for every manifestation of nature with which he is confounded, yet he is distinct from it. He teaches sacrifice as a condition of life, yet he abrogates it in favor of devotion.

But for him that makes
No sacrifice, he hath nor part nor lot
Even in the present world. How should he share
Another, O thou Glory of thy Line? (Chap. IV)

Though to know is more
Than diligence, yet worship better is
Than knowing, and renouncing better still.
. . . . . .
But most of all I love
Those happy ones to whom 'tis life to live
In single fervid faith and love unseeing,
Drinking the blessed Amrit of my Being (Chap. XII)

Krishna becomes the supreme creator, Lord, and fighter, yet he is none of them.

Death am I, and Immortal Life I am,
Arjuna! Sat and Asat, Visible Life,
And Life Invisible! (Chap. IX)

[2] "Hail to thee, God of Gods! Be favorable!"

He has the attributes of all the gods and of none of them. Krishna is a personal, supreme god, yet he is a pantheistic principle confounded with the sand, the earth, semen, and water.

Whereby the worlds of visible things are born
As from a *Yoni*. Know! I am that womb:

. . . . . .

I am the fresh taste of water; I
The silver of the moon, the gold o' the sun,
The word of worship in the Veds, the thrill
That passeth in the ether, and the strength
Of man's shed seed. I am the good sweet smell
of the moistened earth, I am the fire's red light,
The vital air moving in all which moves. (Chapter VII)

The minds untaught mistake me, veiled in form;
Naught see they of my secret Presence, naught
Of my hid Nature, ruling all which lives. (Chapter IX)

Krishna is a kaleidoscopic creation pieced together from a myriad historical and mythical fragments. He is neither constant nor consistent in his attributes, and never achieves the clarity and distinction of a homogeneous conception. In India, the path to the Absolute was prepared by the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Buddhists, and the Jains. The spiritual path in all its possibilities was known and known well. Krishnaism has neither the depth of Upanishadic speculation, nor the purity of Buddhist moral self-discipline, nor does it teach the classless universality of Buddha or Christ.

But I am he
Made the Four Castes, and portioned them a place
After their qualities and gifts. (Chapter IV)

At the most, Krishnaism as delineated in the Bhagavad-Gita, is a national Kshatriya religion, addressed to a warrior, sanctioning the "rightful war" as a "gate unto heaven," upholding the caste system as god-given, and the Brahmin priests as godlike.

Among Hindus, interpretations of the Gita are by no means unanimous. Some consider it a purely esoteric system in which everything is highly symbolical. Others emphasize the fact that the Gita is part of tradition, and that as such it cannot be considered either esoteric or inspired. Still others think it is just a beautiful poem and nothing more. To some, the doctrine expressed in the Gita is one of action; to others, one of devotion. The interpretation of its philosophy ranges from the extremes of dualism to nondualism, yet Krishna is always a personal god, the receiver of all sacrifices who must be loved in order to be understood.[3]

Krishnaism as a solution for the problem of the unity of God presents a typical Hindu solution. The supreme position is shared by a number of gods, as in the Trimurti (Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva)—a medieval compromise unknown in Vedic times. In some sects, Shiva rules supreme; in others, Brahma. The Vishnuites claim all the titles, func-

[3] "We see in the Mahabharata the process by which Krsna is made into a supreme deity. In some places he is represented as worshipping Mahadeva. There are contexts where his divinity is denied. In Sabhaparva Sisupala contests Krsna's claim to rank as god; Bhisma defends it: 'Whoever says that Krsna is a mere man is of dull intellect (mandadhih).' From this it is obvious that there was strong opposition to the deification of Krsna."—S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 494.

tions, and attributes for their god. The three deities are now explained as different aspects of the same supreme god.

By some strange process the older gods of the indigenous peoples became the emanations or children of the younger Aryan deities. This was possible only by the clever manipulation of a priest-caste whose prerogatives had been threatened, and who had to bow to the pressure of the indigenous population.

Vishnu, a minor Aryan personification of the sun, was philosophized into the supreme position to take precedence over Brahma. The solar disc became a great deity, relegating the much older Prince of Darkness, Krishna of the extinct lunar clan, to an incarnation of himself. Krishna means black; Arjuna, white. Krishna represents the darker, indigenous race; Arjuna, the lighter Aryan conquerors. Yet Krishna guides the white Arjuna and leads him through falsehoods to victory. By the time the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad-Gita were composed, the Brahmin priests had made severe compromises with the far older civilization they had conquered. The victory of the Aryans was a social one in that they had successfully imposed the caste system. The indigenous peoples' victory was in terms of symbols and gods.

The Krishna of the Gita, in spite of the later transformations, is evidently based upon a pre-Aryan warrior prince. Even without considering this pre-Aryan figure and the many demons who had this proper name, there are four characters in the Mahabharata who also share it. The first Krishna we encounter is the alleged author of this

epic, the Rishi Krishna Dwaipayana, also called Vyasa. The second Krishna is the charioteer who teaches Arjuna trickery and deceit, who leads him to violate the rules of battle and advises him to pray to Durga, the goddess of the nether-world, or hell. The third personage with the name Krishna is Draupadi (patronymic), the polyandrous wife of the five brothers. This association of the name Krishna with polyandry suggests pre-Aryan origin since the invading Aryans strongly opposed the custom. The fourth Krishna of the Mahabharata emerges as an incarnation of Vishnu, and as a god of love in the Gita, the poem interpolated in the sixth book of the epic. In whatever guise Krishna appears, even in passages of the late Puranas, he never loses his affinity to darkness, Durga and death.

Verbal coincidences between the Bhagavad-Gita and the New Testament cannot be denied. However, the fundamental dissimilarities are so pronounced it is impossible to conceive of any direct influence of Krishnaism on Christianity, or vice versa.

1. Krishna is a proper name meaning Black, Darkness, Wicked. Christ is a title of Jesus of Nazareth, the Anointed.

2. Krishna is one of many incarnations of Vishnu, the solar god. Christ is the single incarnation of God the Father, the only begotten Son.

3. Krishna was a professsional fighter, a warrior prince. Christ is the unarmed Prince of Peace.

4. Krishna urged Arjuna to participate in a fratricidal

war of extermination in order to avoid sin. Christ opposed war of any kind and extolled the peacemakers.

5. Krishna resorted to trickery and deceit in order that Arjuna might kill his adversaries. Christ taught purity and forgiveness, even to the enemy.

6. Krishna fecundated innumerable women and had thousands of children. Christ was celibate and childless.

7. Krishna upheld the caste system as god-given. Christ taught a casteless society, with love for God and for one's neighbor as the highest law.

8. Krishna excoriated Arjuna's compassion as a taint of weakness, while Christ was compassionate and preached that the meek shall inherit the earth.

9. Krishna revealed himself to only one person, Arjuna, in the form of a vision. Jesus was known to multitudes and taught large numbers of people.

10. Krishna represents the Kaliyuga, the black and evil age. Christ represents peace and forgiveness.

11. Krishna admits other gods besides himself, while Christ admits only the Father who is absolute and has no other gods beside him.

12. Krishna is a pantheistic principle confounded with the earth, the atmosphere, the moon, the womb, and the semen. Christ was an individual, the Son of Mary.

13. Krishna, as well as the world, is Maya—illusion (also magic, sorcery, illusory, phantasm), or Lila (sport). Christ is the ultimate reality and the world is a place of concrete experience and test.

Krishna was not a founder of a religion as was Moses,

Mohammed and Christ, nor did he found a philosophical system like Gautama Buddha. He had no disciples and he did not preach or lecture to a following. He was the personal vision of one person, Arjuna. Krishna could not have founded a religion because he was deified by the later Brahmins. It was they who founded Krishnaism.

Some Hindus believe that Jesus the Christ was an avatar of Vishnu. Many others, conditioned by the Bhakti religion, reveal an astonishingly profound understanding of Christianity. Ramakrishna and Gandhi are only two outstanding examples of the Hindu's sympathy with Christianity. In spite of this, their basic conception of God and of the Son of God differs widely. In addition to the above-mentioned details of the life and principles for which Krishna stands, the paramount difference is between the ethical monotheism of the Judeo-Christian God, and the obvious pantheism of Krishna. God is neither the solar disc, nor a professional fighter. He is not lost in the sands of innumerable rivers, nor dissipated among uncounted stars. The Judeo-Christian conception transcends infinitely that of a nature god. As we read in the sublime words of Psalm 19, even "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

18

Conclusion

The differences between East and West, as they emerge from our comparisons of Buddhism and Christianity and of Christ and Krishna, are not trivial, as has often been asserted, but fundamental. Both Indian and Western traditions are based upon age-old views, so deeply ingrained that they cannot be reconciled by well-meaning generalities.

The whole life attitude of India, whether Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhist or medieval Hindu, is opposed not only to those of the three great revealed religions of the West, but to the Western philosophy of life which emerged during classic and preclassic days in Egyptian, Sumerian, Greek, and Roman science, law, philosophy, and art.

As stated before, the West exalts positive action and full participation in life. India denies action, but since there is no life without action it formulated the compromise doctrine of action with detachment, or action without full participation of the whole man. The Western attitude toward life is an objective one. The Hindu attitude toward life is one of total subjectivity. In the West this objective attitude has led to science while the Eastern attitude has led further and further away from science, for there

philosophers denied the reality of material problems altogether. In the West the body of man is considered not only beautiful, since classical Greece, but the temple of the Holy Ghost, as in Christianity. India thinks the body is evil, as in Buddhism, and a tomb of the spirit, as in the Yoga doctrine and medieval Hinduism. Indians never had Olympic games, or a concept such as the *mens sana in corpore sano* of the Romans. The West always manifested social consciousness which asserted itself in spite of periods of despotism. India has never been concerned with social problems, regarding them simply as the results of the law of karma and reincarnation—which are capable of rationalizing any social evil whatsoever.

The tragedy of the Hindu caste system lay not only in the fact that millions of the lower castes and outcastes were excluded from the benefits of Indian culture and civilization, but that this stigma lasted even beyond the grave. Western slaves, whether born to this status or reduced by conquest, at least were not made to believe that their stigma was the result of sins accumulated in previous lives, or, what is far worse, that any infraction of the arbitrary laws would result in an even more disastrous birth in a next reincarnation.

Similarities surely exist in the basic needs and expressions of all people, but are overshadowed by differences in fundamental attitudes toward the meaning and ultimate purpose of life. It is not human needs, color, or language that divide us, but diametrically opposed attitudes.

Perhaps only personal contact between peoples can

eradicate strangeness, and resulting antagonism. The exchange of scientific, educational, and agricultural methods, traveling exhibitions, student exchange, and so forth, point the way that may eventually lead to a *rapprochement*. It was, after all, a Greek, Megasthenes, who went to India; an Italian, Marco Polo to China; a Frenchman, Francis Xavier, to Japan; yet there is no instance of any Indian, Chinese or Japanese of consequence who has visited the West until recent times, either to teach or to learn. The Chinese Wall, traditional Tibetan prohibitions from visiting its territory, Japanese isolation, as well as India's prohibitions on foreign travel, certainly have not contributed toward cementing relations between the East and West. The Indians thought that foreign people were evil, and foreign countries, lands of death.[1]

It has become fashionable among many Westerners to feel apologetic toward the "much older East."[2] This is an unfortunate misconception, for as we have seen, the West is at least as old, and has developed from an entirely different heritage of objectivism, positivism, and optimism. This does not mean, however, that the West is "superior"

[1] Even Gandhi was excommunicated by a branch of his caste for his resolve to go to England and study in a foreign land.–M. K. Gandhi, *The Study of My Experiments with Truth* (Washington, 1948), pp. 57-59.

[2] C. E. M. Joad, *Counter Attack from the East* (Bombay, 1951). A. W. Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity* (New York, 1951). J. G. Bennett, *What Are We Living For?* (London, 1949). C. Isherwood, ed. *Vedanta for the Western World* (Hollywood, 1945). R. Guénon, *East and West* (London, 1941). W. J. Grant, *The Spirit of India* (New York, 1938). K. Saunders, *The Gospel for Asia* (New York, 1928). U. Close, *The Revolt of Asia* (New York, 1927).

to the East. We simply have different premises and have solved certain social, ethical, and scientific problems much earlier than they.

No one could claim that the West has not had its own share of social evils, despotism, religious persecutions and superstitions. But whenever there were social evils there emerged forces to oppose them. Thus, slowly and laboriously, the West evolved social patterns in which the people acquired larger and larger shares of governing power. Religious persecutions took place whenever "heresies" arose and when individualism asserted itself through religious theories and interpretations. But the religious persecutions of the Middle Ages have passed, and the groups that were persecuted survived and to a large degree contributed to the religious liberties we enjoy today.

The superstitions that were current during the darkest days of European isolation and ignorance have vanished under the impact of growing scientific advancement, philosophical criticism, and humanism. Thus medieval alchemy was transformed into chemistry, astrology became astronomy, and magic led to science during the period of enlightenment.

What social revolutions are there to report from India during the last two thousand years? What yogis have made important contributions to medicine and psychology that can be applied to help others, and what Hindu religious heresies have had as their result lasting social and economic advancements? India's lower castes and outcastes did not revolt against their oppressors, nor did the craft

castes assert their combined power, as did the guilds in medieval Europe who challenged both the church and the nobility and emerged victorious.[3]

In Greece the farmers revolted as early as the sixth century B.C. and forced Solon to carry out economic and political reforms in their favor. In Rome the brothers Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus revolted in the second century B.C. against the aristocratic Roman Senate. They agitated for land reforms in favor of the underprivileged farmers. Even though the revolt of the Gracchi against the corruptions and power of the Senate was fruitless, at least they did rise and die for political ideals. In 70 B.C. the slaves of Rome banded together and rose in protest under the leadership of Spartacus. Classic and modern

[3] As recently as 1932, Gandhi wrote, on the occasion of his famous fast against untouchability:

"It is well to remind ourselves of what wrongs we have heaped upon the devoted heads of the *Harijans* [outcastes]. Socially they are lepers. Economically they are worse than slaves. Religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall 'houses of God.' They are denied the use, on the same terms as the castemen, of public roads, public schools, public hospitals, public wells, public taps, public parks and the like, and in some cases their approach within a measured distance is a social crime, and in some other rare enough cases their very sight is an offence. They are relegated for their residence to the worst quarters of cities or villages where they practically get no social services. Caste Hindu lawyers and doctors will not serve them as they do other members of society. Brahmins will not officiate at their religious functions. The wonder is that they are at all able to eke out an existence or that they still remain within the Hindu fold. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against their suppressors.

"I have recalled these tragic and shameful facts in order to make the workers vividly realize the implications of the Yeravda Pact. It is only ceaseless effort that can raise these downtrodden fellow-beings from degradation, purify Hinduism, and raise the whole Hindu Society and with it the whole of India."—Pyarelal, *The Epic Fast* (Ahmedabad, 1932), pp. 319f.

Western history names countless idealists who fought and died in the name of religious, economic, and political freedom. The battles the East is fighting now have been fought over and over again in the West since classic times.

But India did not look backwards or forwards, for it lived in a dream outside of time. It was not endowed with a historical sense like the more active, positive West. Time in India is reckoned in gigantic cycles of millions of years which lose all reality, although we may stand in awe of such of their conceptions as the "yugas," or ages, of the world. Yet the Hindus looked disdainfully at the passage of the life span of individuals. Until recently India did not keep track of its own history. There is no written history in India at all; there are no reliable dates in its history until the Greek Megasthenes became ambassador to King Chandragupta's court in 300 B.C. and wrote his observations. But this, too, was soon forgotten by the Hindus, who drifted back into their reveries for many more centuries.

The famous Asoka pillar and cave edicts of the third century B.C., which bear precise dates and inscriptions, were disregarded for over two thousand years, and no Hindu paid any attention to them until nineteenth-century English scholars recognized them as the most important extant documents of the history of early Buddhism. The Chinese have their Annals; the Greeks, their Herodotus; and the Romans their Livy; but India never produced a historical writer of importance, or an objective history. Is it not strange that India, with its great reflective pre-

occupations, should so consistently have disregarded the history of its own people and culture? Only among primitive people do we find such a complete lack of the historical sense. The Australian aborigines, for instance, have no comprehension of either past or future; they call both simply "the dreaming." In a similar manner the Hindus relegated their own past to a dream, from which they were awakened only when Western scholars taught India her own history.[4]

For a country like India, which so consistently emphasized the spirituality of life and taught asceticism, yoga, and vedanta, the national arts are strangely of the world. The caves and temples are overpowering in the scale and the confusing wealth of decorations. They do not affirm the doctrine of maya, or the illusion of corporeal existence; on the contrary. Especially the countless images of the phallus of Shiva; the Maithuna couples in Buddhist cave temples which show the conjugal relations between the divinities of the Mahayana pantheon; and the exaggerated erotic positions which adorn many medieval Hindu temples do not convince us of the victory over sensuality

[4] In the Hindu theory of cosmic time there are four yugas, or ages of the world, constituting a mahayuga. Two thousand mahayugas form a kalpa, or day and night of Brahma, 4,320,000 years. After a kalpa the total destruction of all the worlds takes place, mahapralaya, which includes the annihilation of the gods. The eternity of God is the ultimate focus of all Western metaphysical thought. When the gods themselves are destroyed, as in Hinduism, spiritual evolution is destroyed, and the history of man loses its meaning. There cannot be a historical consciousness when there is no belief in an eternal unchanging principle. Cf. Roger L. Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History* (New York, 1953), pp. 203-211.

and matter. Hinduism is inconsistent in that it teaches asceticism but covers India with countless images in which sexual references are obvious.

In a recently published study, *Erotic Aspects of Hindu Sculpture*, Lawrence E. Gichner illustrates erotic stone carvings from five medieval Hindu temples, the Surya temple at Konarak, the temple at Khujaraho, the Nepalese temple at Benares, the temple of the Virgins at Vizagapatam, and the Tiruvatakudi temple (Karikal). The erotic postures of these couples are explained by the Hindus as the relationship between matter and spirit, or god and man. Yet these overexplicit illustrations of the Kama Sutras and the Ananga-Ranga (commentaries on the techniques of love) leave no doubt that at least some of them are so erotic that they cannot be rationalized away with esoteric explanations of sophisticated or perverted love-making. Neither the Kama Sutras nor the Ananga-Ranga pretend to be books on metaphysics. They give explicit explanations for the conjugal act and its variations, therefore these carvings are exactly what they portray, no more nor less.

It is interesting to note that in some of these temple carvings shown by Gichner, children assist the male and female figures in the conjugal act (p. 25), or attending figures participate in the embrace; four persons are involved in the act (pp. 10, 12). In some other bas-reliefs a man is portrayed having intercourse with two women (pp. 26, 45, 47), and in the most fantastic example from

the Tiruvatakudi temple one man is shown making love to six women at the same time (p. 50).

One may question, without prudery or "Western prejudice," whether these erotic excesses drive home a spiritual truth. The sacredness and beauty of the procreative act hardly calls for orgies, nor is a more acrobatic position a greater sign of spirituality. Yet in typical Hindu fashion, Swami Vivekananda exclaims: "Fools do not understand, and they never will, for they look at it only from the physical side." [5] It is doubtful however, whether the illiterate Hindu masses would interpret these erotic plays any more esoterically than we do.

> Each community in India had (and has) its temple, not only as a place of worship but also as a center of social contact. Here the latest news was exchanged and discussed, and they could and did see and examine the numerous sculptures which were their books, source of knowledge and model for their own behaviour. . . . Hindu thought has always insisted upon the importance of sex and its physical manifestations. Thus the temple decorations contain many carvings which demonstrate the various positions of the marital embrace.[6]

Sensuality as such is not foreign to Western art. It is sufficient to recall here certain Pompeian frescoes and French Rococo paintings, but never has pornography been pressed into the service of any of the great Western revealed religions. Certain Hindu temples are phantasmagoria of an eroticism that does not occur in any known religion except medieval Hinduism.

[5] L. E. Gichner, *Erotic Aspects of Hindu Sculpture* (1949), p. 3.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Aside from the eroticism of the divine couples and the typical exaggerations of female sexual characteristics, the Hindu gods usually have their eyes half closed. They look within and do not seem to care for either man or nature. They exude the detachment of those who are beyond the struggles of this life. The highest expression of this can be found in those Boddhisattvas or representations of the Trimurti, who with mysterious smiles are lost in the Nirvana of their inner visions. The strongest contrast to these rapt, inward turned faces of the East we find in Roman ultra-realistic portraits. Their eyes are always open and they gaze intently, even to the point of having the pupils indented in order to convey the suggestions of participating in the life without and scrutinizing their surroundings. The mouth is often parted, as in the famous bust of Cicero, and the Roman heads have an intensity, an aliveness, a "speaking likeness," most representative of Western culture, which venerates great men and counts philosophers, scientists, artists, and statesmen among its most precious possessions.

Christian sacred art, particularly during the Middle Ages, abounds in gentle-looking representations of Christ, the Madonna, and the saints. Typical of the Gothic period are the smiling angels who impart their serene happiness to the worshipers in the cathedral. Except for the crucifixion, a special problem in the development of sacred Christian art, there are many carvings of Christ (in Chartres and Amiens) where he stands serenely, holding the Bible and blessing the multitude. The bearded face is gentle,

the eyes are open, and a sweet human quality diffuses those carvings, which were called "Le beau Dieu," the beautiful God. In medieval representations of Christ and Mary, the earlier hieratic, oriental characteristics had given way to humanized and dignified religious images.

The Western attitude towards art can be illustrated best by those Renaissance portraits where individuals are shown against the background of the sky, elegant and unique, proud and self-sufficient. In most of these painted portraits, whether by Bellini, Botticelli, Titian, or the Franco-Flemish masters, the figures are so placed as to dominate nature. The landscape or architecture, or even biblical references, serve but as a backdrop for the individualized expression of the Western countenance. The European Renaissance developed the concept of "man as a work of art," and in some paintings that perfection of individual attainment is exquisitely brought out. Western man has made himself master over nature and he is portrayed as such.

The obvious eroticism of much Hindu art, the Tantric schools of yoga with their sexual practices, the popular worship of the phallus and the female organ, the extreme luxury of Hindu ruling castes, and the utter disregard of social problems and human suffering until most recent times, do not attest to the superiority of Hindu over Western spirituality. In the West, we too are aware that life is a struggle, yet the obstacles are not there to stop us but to be overcome. We do not stand on the bank of a river, lamenting how far is the other shore, or how deep

its bed. We accept the challenge of the river and try to triumph by crossing over.

The Hindu systems of religion have inspired many Westerners to abandon their own superstitions and embrace far more fantastic ones preserved in India since prehistoric times. Tragically enough, those "searchers for the truth" mistake magic for religion, Brahminical intolerance for ethics, caste prejudice for social order, superstition for spirituality, and primitive notions about the cosmos for philosophy.

It emerges as an incontrovertible fact that in order to continue our progress we must look toward the West and not toward the East, for whenever European culture turned furthest away from its classical heritage it was at its lowest and most superstitious level, and whenever the West returned to its classical sources culture flourished, and reason, science, beauty and human dignity returned. The most fundamental values of the Western heritage are based upon Judeo-Christian ethics, Roman law, and Greek objectivity.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agni: Personification of fire, the first god of the Indo-Aryans; *agnihotra,* fire sacrifice, practiced in Vedic times.

Ahimsa: Non-killing. Buddhist principle of non-violence, extended to all living beings; practiced more consistently by the Jains than either Buddhists or Hindus.

Ananda: Buddha's favorite disciple, the St. John of Hinayana Buddhism, to whom many of Buddha's important sayings are addressed.

Arjuna: White. Name of Pandu prince who held the famous discourse with Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, celebrated in the Bhagavad-Gita.

Arhat: Buddhist monk of the Hinayana school who has obtained enlightenment and who will not be reborn but has entered Nirvana during lifetime. The four stages leading to Arhatship: 1) Entering the stream; 2) The once-returner; 3) The non-returner; 4) Arhat, entered Nirvana.

Aryan: from *arya,* noble. Epithet of invaders of India, also, belonging to the faithful, reverent, man of one's own tribe.

Asana: Yoga position. There are eighty-four positions, though four are the principle ones: 1) Posture of attainment; 2) Lotus posture; 3) Auspicious posture; 4) Lion posture.

Asoka: Emperor of the Maurya Empire. After conversion to Buddhism he became its most powerful protector, during the third century B.C. Council at Patna under his leadership determined the Hinayana Buddhist canon; one of his edicts imposed penalties on schisms. Had his edicts carved on large stone columns which are still in existence in Northern India.

Asramas: Four conditions of life for Brahmins: 1) Unmarried student under Guru; 2) Married householder; 3) Anchorite; 4) Religious mendicant.

Asura: Demons. Breathed forth by Prajapati, or Brahma, before the gods were created.

Ashva-medha: Horse sacrifice. Practiced during Vedic times by kings in order to obtain offspring; accompanied by strange nocturnal ceremony by the king's wife and a horse.

Atman: Breath, spirit, also soul. Principle of life, the self identified with Brahman in Upanishadic philosophy.

Avatar: Descent. Incarnation of the supreme in an animal or mortal, savior-type. Krishna is one of the ten *avataras* of Vishnu.

Avidya: Ignorance, as compared to *vidya,* knowledge. In Buddhism, *avidya* is attachment to desire; its total elimination results in enlightenment, the goal of Buddhism. (*Vid,* root of the word *veda,* also, magic formula, spell).

Bhakti: Personal devotion, love. Practiced by followers of Krishna, Shiva, and certain female deities. Fostered in the Bhagavad-Gita, the Puranas, and Tantras. (*Bhakti-marga,* way of love and devotion, *bhakti-shastras,* scriptures stressing devotion.)

Bhikshu: (Pali: *bikkhu*) Religious devotee, monk of the Hinayana school who obtains his food by begging, wears a yellow robe, has a tonsured head, and has given up all ties to the secular life.

Brahma: Noun for praise. Later, the demiurge of the universe, and the first member of the Hindu triad. Brahman, the absolute.

Bodhisattva: Enlightened one. Buddhist saints of the Mahayana school who, though enlightened, retard their entrance into Nirvana until all creatures have been saved; potential Buddhas.

Buddha: Awakened, enlightened. Epithet of Siddhartha, Gautama Buddha. Also Sakyamuni, sage of the Sakya tribe.

Buddhas (Mahayana): Adi, the supreme, or first Buddha, author of the universe; five Dhyani, creative (meditation) Buddhas; Manushi, earthly Buddha, like Gautama; Medicine, healing Buddhas; Maitreya, future Buddha.

Bodhi tree: The tree (*ficus religiosa*) under which Gautama Buddha experienced his illumination at Gaya in Behar (Magadha).

Candala: Outcaste. Member of the most despised caste, born of a Shudra father and a Brahmin mother.

Chakra: Wheel. Buddhist symbol of transmigration; eight-spoked wheel, symbol of the Eightfold Path. According to the Yoga doctrine, there are six vital centers, *chakras,* in the subtle body of man which can be progressively awakened.

Darshana: Demonstration. The six post-upanishadic schools of philosophy inquiring into the metaphysical and logical problems raised by the Principal Upanishads.

Dasyus (or Dasas): Epithet of the dark indigenous population of India, "hostile demons," coined by the invading Indo-Aryans.

Deva: Heavenly, god. Devi the consort of Shiva; Mahadevi, the supreme female goddess of the Tantrics.

Dharma: Custom, usage, law, caste duty, religious truth. Dhammapada (Pali), the earliest canonical collection of Buddhist laws.

Dhyana: Practice of meditation in general.

Dravidians: The indigenous population of India. *Dravida,* South India, where Tamil and other non-Aryan languages are spoken.

Dvija: Twice-born. Member of the three upper castes who, after study with a Guru, is invested with the sacred thread, this initiation being his "second birth."

Guna: Quality. One of the all-pervading qualities of the universe, formulated by the Sankhya school; *sattva,* goodness, *rajas,* passion, *tamas,* darkness.

Guru: Teacher, guide; one to be honored.

Hinayana: Smaller (lesser) vehicle. The original canonical tradition of Buddhism, also known as Theravada, or the teaching of the elders.

Indra: Vedic god of heaven, the atmosphere personified. One of the most popular gods of the Vedas who was dethroned by Krishna during the Epic period. *Indraloka,* Indra's world, heaven.

Ishvara: Master, lord, prince. Personal aspect of Brahman, also title given to Shiva.

Jaganatha (Juggernaut): Lord of the world. The image of Krishna worshiped in Puri (Orissa); he is drawn on a huge car (*ratha*) through the streets by thousands of worshipers at his festivals.

Jalandhara: see *Kanishka.*

Jatakas: Birth stories. Large collection of stories, folklore and legends telling of former lives of Buddha; moral and edifying tales.

Kali: The black, fierce, and terrible consort of Shiva. Principle of destruction, also known as Uma, Durga, Bhairavi, Parvati, Yogini, etc.

Kalpa: see *Yuga.*

Kama: Love. Vedic god of love or desire; also, son of Krishna. *Kamadeva,* god of love.

Kanishka: Kushan king who played a role in Mahayana Buddhism similar to Asoka in Hinayana. Under Kanishka a council took place at Jalandhara, *c.* 100 A.D., at which the Mahayana doctrine was first defined.

Karma: Deed; also ethical retribution, or destiny. *Karma-marga,* way of works, the belief in the efficacy of sacrifices, rites, lustral washings and austerities; *karma-yoga,* the way of right actions, but with complete detachment as to results and consequences.

Krishna: Black, dark. Hero of the Bhagavad-Gita, charioteer of Arjuna; god of love and god of yoga in epic and medieval Hinduism.

Lingam: Male organ. Symbol of Shiva; *lingam-yoni,* symbol of the sexes in conjunction.

Mahatma (*maha,* great + *atman,* self): Having a noble nature, great; title given to Gandhi and other outstanding Hindus.

Mahayana: Greater vehicle. Sect of Buddhism which teaches salvation through faith, grace, good works, and like principles; worship of many Bodhisattvas, innumerable Buddhas and relics. Also known as Northern Buddhism. Tibetan Lamaism, Zen, and the Pure Land sect are some of its many divisions. Has large body of metaphysical treatises and dogmas. See *Shunyata.*

Mantra: Prayer, praise; also magic formula in abbreviated form for chanting, such as the yogic magic syllable, Om.

Mara: The principle of evil; the tempter of Buddha as he was experiencing his illumination under the Bodhi tree.

Maya: Veil of illusion, deception, magic. In Vedanta, the universe and all its creatures are but *maya,* illusion.

Mudra: Gesture. Hand positions used in religious service, ritual and dance. The mudras of the gods symbolize their particular functions.

Nirvana: (Pali, *Nibbana*): Complete cessation of all desires, compared to the blowing out of a candle. State of one who has

reached deliverance from the wheel of rebirth, not further defined by Gautama Buddha.

Om: Sacred syllable uttered at beginning and end of Veda reading. Said to contain all mysteries; chanted by yogins in order to achieve knowledge of the absolute.

Padma: Lotus. Buddhist symbol of divine origin; also, symbol of purity and birth. *Padmasana*, lotus throne of the Buddha. In medieval Hinduism, symbol of mother goddesses and yoni; also, name of Lakshmi, consort of Vishnu.

Prajapati: Lord of creatures, presiding over creation. Term applied to Brahma in his aspect as the active creator of the universe, but also given to other gods.

Prakrit: Matter, as opposed to spirit. The passive female energy (*shakti*) of any deity.

Prana: The breath of life, an all-pervading energy. Yogic breathing is concerned with inhaling prana.

Purana: Tale of old times, ancient. The Puranas are medieval Hindu scriptures (eighteen principal puranas) which express sectarian views of individual gods.

Purusha: The original eternal man; also, supreme being and active masculine soul of the universe, an aspect of Brahma.

Reincarnation: See *Samsara.*

Rishi: Seven Rishis, or seven inspired singers of sacred songs to whom the hymns of the Vedas are supposed to have been revealed; later, the seven stars of the Great Bear.

Rudra: The howling, roaring, terrible. Vedic god of the Maruts, or storm gods. In his terrible, destructive aspects he became Shiva in later Hinduism.

Samadhi: Identification. Highest (fourth) level of yogic meditation.

Saman: Vedic stanza arranged for chanting, hence, *Samaveda.* The Four Vedas are also called *samhitas*, collection of mantras.

Samsara: The wheel of becoming. The round of rebirth, or reincarnation; metempsychosis.

Sannyasin: Religious mendicant. Fourth stage of the life of a Brahmin when he severs all ties to live the religious life.

Satori: See *Zen.*

Shudra: The fourth (colored) caste, born to serve the three higher castes: Vaishras, husbandmen; Kshatriyas, warriors; Brahmin, priests.

Shunyata: The void. Ultimate metaphysical tenet of Mahayana Buddhism: "the real is the void and the void is the real." According to this doctrine neither Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Samsara, or Nirvana are real, but are an illusion.

Siddhis: Supernatural, or magic powers attained by the yogin through certain postures, breathing exercises, and ascetic discipline.

Soma: Fermented juice extracted from a plant of the *asclepias acida* family. Personified as a god, drunk or used as a sacred libation in Vedic times. In medieval Hinduism, moon.

Sruti: Religious prescription, sacred text, revealed. The opposite of *smriti*, tradition, that which is handed down, i.e., a work based upon the tradition, like the Code of Manu, or the Bhagavad-Gita.

Sutra: Thread, cord, short rule or aphorism; also, collection of rules. Now used for verse. *Gatha*, short religious, but non-Vedic verse.

Tantra: Thread, warp of a weft, fundamental doctrine. The tantras are late medieval scriptures of an erotic, magical nature, treating of the worship of the female energies (*shaktis*) of the gods.

Tathagata: He who comes and goes in the same way. Epithet of Buddha, i.e., as the other Buddhas who preceded him.

Trimurti: Medieval Hindu triad of gods, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva, the creator-preserver-destroyer. Most characteristic representation of the *trimurti* is found in the Ellora caves, *c.* eighth century A.D.

Triratna: The three jewels. Basic tenets of Buddhism containing the Buddha, the Law (dhamma), and the community of monks (sangha),

Tripitaka: The three baskets. The canonical collection of Pali scriptures of Hinayana Buddhism.

Upanishads: Secret doctrines; also, forest treatises, because taught in the secrecy of the forest. Eighth to sixth century B.C. They

are mystical prose works with interspersed poems dealing with the absolute, yoga, pure knowledge, etc. There are thirteen Principal Upanishads, though hundreds of works claim this title.

Varna: Caste, derived from color, complexion, hence our word varnish.

Varuna: The encompasser of the universe. Supreme deity of the Rig-Veda, the heaven, especially the night sky, in contrast to Mitra, the ruler of the day sky. Varuna is the upholder of the moral order of the universe.

Veda: The collection of hymns in praise of the deified forces of nature by the earliest Indo-Aryans: Rig, Yajur, and Sama. The fourth, Atharva-Veda, is a collection of spells and sorcery, also used as a textbook for medicine.

Vishnu: Zenith. Sun god who "measures the sky in three strides." He rose to prominence in later Hinduism as second member of the Hindu triad.

Yoga: From the root, *yuj,* to join; hence our word, yoke. Union with the absolute through breathing, chanting and body postures; also, supernatural means, magic.

Yoni: Female organ. Origin, birthplace.

Yab-Yum: Father-mother. Tibetan deities with their shaktis in conjugal embrace. Male is said to symbolize power, or method, and the female, wisdom, which utilizes it.

Yuga: An age of the world. The four *yugas* are ages of the world contained in a *kalpa,* or a day and night of Brahma (4,320,000 years). Mahapralaya is the total dissolution of all the worlds after a *kalpa,* which includes even the gods.

Zen (Chinese, *Ch'an*): Meditation Buddhism. Founded by Indian thinker, Bodhidharma, during the sixth century A.D. in China. Does not rely on any written tradition, but on teaching of patriarchs. Principle of *satori,* sudden, immediate realization of the truth. Training by meditation and *koans,* sayings that admit of no ordinary, logical-intellectual solution, but shock the student into the sudden realization of a Zen truth.

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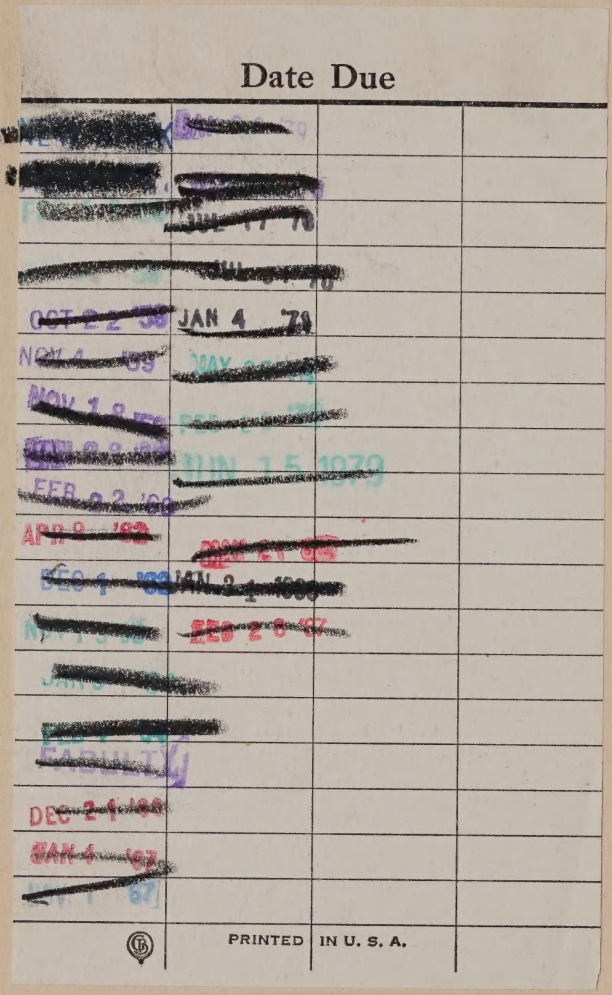
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